

A MODERN
REVOLT FROM
ROMÉ

JOHN BERKELEY

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A Modern Revolt from Rome.



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By
JOHN BERKELEY

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New York :
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CHAPTER I.

Memory Pictures.

A GENTLE, yet keen and forceful man was Father Donald Underwood, respected and beloved priest of the large and influential parish Church of St. Carmel, in the city of San Francisco.

It was the eve of All Souls' Day, and Father Underwood was walking to and fro in his room, passing in deep meditation the hour which must elapse before he entered the church and took his place in the confessional to shrive the many penitents who surely would be present.

It had been a busy day, and a yet busier evening awaited him. As he now quietly walked back and forth, with his hands clasped behind his back, his whole appearance would betoken that he was at peace with God and man. Of fine physique, dignified in bearing, and scholarly in appearance, with the true nobility of a kindly soul beaming from every feature, he well deserved the proud and affectionate esteem

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in which his people held him. For ten years he had labored among them with untiring zeal, cheering the sorrowing, visiting the sick, burying the dead, carrying with him everywhere the true spirit of Christ.

Underneath his calm exterior his self-sacrificing heart long had felt a strange unrest, conflicting emotions, known only to his Maker and himself. His eyes now glanced lingeringly over the books which occupied nearly two sides of the room.

"What words these volumes speak to me!" he mused. "That which I hear within my heart, is it the echo of these words, or is it the voice of God speaking to me? This work—I love it. My soul is in it. How I love these true-hearted people who come to me like confiding children! I am their father, guide, and friend. They come to me with their trials and afflictions, their joys and their sorrows. I share in them all. The little ones—how dear they are to me, and yet—and yet—'and the Word was made flesh.' Do I preach that Word? Do I preach as I believe? Do I believe as I preach? In my whole life my one desire has been to be true. O, Thou Great Spirit, far-reaching as the horizon of eternity, yet tender as mother-love, come unto me! Direct me, O Father, and make me strong to follow Thy lead ever."

The hour sped on. Back and forth he paced, with head bent in thought. The great problem of the ages weighed on him. In panoramic vision he saw the eager answers of the world of thought in the generations which had lived before; but the skyline of his own thought would not clear; though often it seemed luminous, yet was it impenetrable. For the hundredth

MEMORY PICTURES.

time his conscious mind turned back baffled, and the great mountain of truth which his subconsciousness had raised into dim light became submerged again.

His mood gradually changed. Mingled with his meditations and half-formed prayers a memory of other days long vanished, yet ever living, ever real, flashed before him like a vision. From out the past there arose the features of a fair-haired girl, almost a child in years, fragile in appearance, sweet and lovely of face. The trusting and affectionate eyes look on him with love. The years seemed to slip from his shoulders. He was again a slender youth, with all the world before him. The vision became more and more a living, breathing reality; and he seemed to hear a gentle voice say, "Donald, dear, I will be true always, come what may."

Overcome by the pleasing memory, he lived for the time in that bright vista of the long ago, when suddenly the sharp clangor of a bell called him back to the present. Looking up he found himself facing a long mirror, in which he saw reflected no slender youth, no ardent lover, no tender maiden, but a tall, broad-shouldered man clad in the black cassock of the priest, and wearing on his head the four-cornered biretta.

"That bell calls me back to earth," he soliloquized. "Donald Underwood," he continued, "you are thirty-five years old, and many seasons have come and gone since first you donned this gown. That sweet girl-face long has been with the angels. They are her fit companions, as heaven is her true home. From each here below the past has gone forever; why disturb its

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rest? We have but the ever-changing present. The future points toward the hill of Eternity; thither on the ocean of Time we drift, whether we will or no."

Struggle as he would, the image of those fleeting moments seemed loath to leave him. There still lingered the dream, precious and beautiful, of other days; an oasis of memory on which he looked with the eyes of the soul.

Another bell rang, and Father Underwood knew by this that callers awaited him below.

Reluctantly he descended the staircase; but he was a devoted man, with the habit of duty strong; so when he reached his reception-room he was once more the dignified ecclesiastic whose heart was filled with genuine kindly interest as he greeted a little girl who came into his presence.

"What can I do for you this evening, my child?"

"Father, please bless this rosary of the Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin. I have waited three days to see you. I want your blessing on them."

"Omnipotens et misericors Deus obsecramus immensam clementiam tuam ut hanc signa Rosarii Septem Dolorem Beatae Mariae Virginis in honorem et laudem Genetricis Filii tui ab ecclesia tua fidei dicata benedices et sanctifices."

"Have you attached all the indulgences to this rosary, Father?"

"Yes, my child; all that the Church allows. Good-night, and may God bless you."

"Thank you, Father, ever so much."

The little girl quietly went out, proudly bearing her newly-blessed treasure with her.

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There entered a woman bearing on her face the trace of recent grief.

"Father," she addressed him, "I have just received news of the death of my son Henry in South Africa. I want some masses said for him. Can you say one of them to-morrow morning in black vestments? Say the others when you can. Here are five dollars. I am sorry I have so little. God grant that my poor boy had the priest before he died! Henry was a good boy, Father; but that is a strange country, and he was at times inclined to be a little wild. His father and I didn't want him to go, but he would. He said he could find a fortune for us all; and now he is dead, dead; and only a few words written to us from some man who was with him—a Protestant—is all we have had. O Father, Father, if only I knew he had the priest I would be a happy woman this night, bitter as is my sorrow!"

The priest consoled the heart-broken mother in a few words that seemed to her like a breath from heaven, and with a "God bless you!" he ushered her to the door. The woman left with firmer steps and heart lightened by the kindly words of the priest as well as by the thought that she had done her highest duty to her dead son.

The next callers were a young man and a young woman, who were evidently on some mission bent, although it was difficult to determine just what, as the young man kept up a rapid-fire talk on the condition of the weather, which seemed to be uppermost in his mind; though his statements thereon seemed rather misleading, as one moment he made the assertion,

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"We are having fine weather now," and with the next breath he unblushingly stated, "It looks much like rain out." However, the young woman, having more courage, came to his rescue:

"Thomas, have n't you something to tell Father?"

Thus aided, the young man managed to say that they wished to be married in three weeks, with a nuptial mass as late in the morning as would be convenient for Father Underwood, as many of their friends lived at a distance

"I know the fasting will be hard on you, Father," she said; "but I do want my cousins to see us married at mass, and their earliest train arrives here at ten o'clock in the morning. I would n't feel married, Father, unless you married us."

Having spoken thus far, she blushed a vivid scarlet and relapsed into silence, while Thomas very seriously contemplated the toes of his shoes as though they were the chief factor in his existence.

"Very well," replied Father Underwood, "we'll have the nuptial mass begin at half-past ten on the day you wish. That will allow time for your friends to reach the church. I do not mind the long fasts before saying mass. I have grown accustomed to them."

The couple departed, and as they went down the front steps Father Underwood overheard the bride-to-be chiding the husband-elect on his non-compliance with his expressed intention to "tell everything himself to the priest, and not beat around the bush."

Father Underwood looked at his watch and saw that it was just time for him to go to his confessional.

MEMORY PICTURES.

He opened the door of the reception-room and found the servant awaiting him in the hall.

"Father," said she, "I have just told several that it is time for the confessional; but," lowering her voice, "there was one, such a beautiful lady, one of the grand people—I think she is a Protestant; so I asked her to wait. Will you see her now?"

"Certainly I 'll see her, gladly."

Father Underwood remained standing in the hall. Almost immediately the servant appeared with the visitor—a tall, stately, and beautiful woman; young, though not in the first flush of youth; clad in rich though modest attire. Her face beautifully chiseled, exquisite in outline, would suggest a nature somewhat too proud and haughty did not certain sensitive lines around the mouth bespeak the tenderness of the heart within; a heart not easily moved, perhaps, but when once its chords were touched, responding with all the intensity of her generous nature.

The priest stepped forward to greet her, then stopped abruptly, as if some voice from another world had called to him. He looked at the lady intently, but spoke no word. His face assumed the whiteness of marble. His breath came hurriedly.

The visitor and the servant looked at him in astonishment.

"Father, you are ill!" anxiously exclaimed the servant. "Do sit down and let me do something for you."

Without replying, but with all his soul showing in his face, his eyes still fixed on the stately woman before him, he faintly said,

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“Constance!”

The visitor started, then looked wonderingly at him; then past him into space; then back again, as she replied:

“Why—that is not my name! There was only one who ever called me that! How did you happen—”

“Father, Father!” interrupted the servant; “you are so pale! You are very ill, I know. Do sit down.”

“No, no; I am not ill—merely a passing faintness. It is nothing.”

Then to his guest he said, with grave courtesy, “Will you kindly step into the library, please?”

As she entered he followed, and gently closed the door.

A half hour passed, and no movement from within. It already was past the time for Father Underwood to be in his confessional, and he was promptness itself always.

Another quarter of an hour, and still no movement from within; nothing but the low sound of voices, more intense than ever.

Hesitatingly the servant knocked at the door, and Father Underwood opened it. His eyes shone with a strange light, half sad, half joyous.

“I shall not go into the church this evening. Tell the other priests that they must do my work for me there—to-night, and kindly see that I have no further interruption.”

He again closed the door, and the servant tiptoed away in amazement.

CHAPTER II.

The Sacrifice of the Mass.

It was morning.

All Souls' Day dawned bright and beautiful. It had rained through the night, making the early day fresh and sweet. The breath of the late-blooming rose filled the air with a delicious odor.

The sun, rising in unobscured splendor, diffused a well-nigh summer heat. His rays were flashed from a thousand windows. In the distance the mountain-tops gleamed in dazzling white light, while the valleys below them had divested themselves of the purple shadows of twilight and were resplendent in their robes of mellow gold. The sky was an immense azure sea melting into the horizon, which was fringed with thin fleecy clouds.

In the parks the birds were beguiled by the warmth into singing their merriest songs; here and there squirrels darted from their hiding-places, seeming to congratulate one another on the pure joy of living.

On the bosom of the land-locked harbor—the noblest perhaps in the world—rested ships of many nations: some, with anchors down, idly rocking with the tide; others, unconscious of their mammoth proportions and magnificent power, were moved about

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by insolent, diminutive, puffing tugboats. One liner, bound for the Orient, had made an early start and, disdaining the aid of any tug, was proudly steering through the Golden Gate. Each throb of her mighty heart sent her nearer to the land of lotus and chrysanthemum; while moment by moment her breath, thick, heavy, inky dark, reached farther and farther back, as if wafting a reluctant good-bye to so fair a scene.

Father Underwood, after a restless and wakeful night, had risen early and was kneeling on the prie-dieu. "O God, our Beloved Father," he prayed, "I bring myself into Thy presence, and ask of Thee light, that I may see my duty; strength, that I may perform the tasks that may be set before me; and Thy blessing on whatever I may do.

"For the cruel injury wrought me so many years ago I ask not revenge, but that Thou givest me strength to forgive; for I have in my soul a wish to do Thy will, but in my heart a bitterness which Thou alone canst take away.

"Most especially do I ask Thy Fatherly love and protection for the one who has suffered from that same cowardly blow which afflicted me. Be Thou the Guard and Protector now as Thou hast been for so many years. Let Thy rod and Thy staff strengthen and support.

"Teach me, Blessed Savior, to say, 'Not my will, O Lord, but Thine be done.' Into Thy hands I commend myself and my future. Amen."

He remained long at his devotions, then arose, and went into the church to prepare for the service. His face showed high resolve and noble purpose; yet there

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was pictured there uncertainty, doubt, anxiety, as of a man standing at the meeting of the ways, not knowing whither to turn nor where to go.

He entered the priests' sacristy.

It was to be a solemn service, and Father Underwood would officiate, assisted by the other priests connected with St. Carmel's Church.

One of the priests stood by the sacristy door leading into the church auditorium; one by one the people came, some handing him a list of names only, while others accompanied the list with a money offering.

"I have no money," whispered one poorly-dressed woman to him, "and Mary is away from home, and I have no one to write for me; but won't you tell Father Underwood to pray for my poor man, Timothy, who died eight months ago?"

"Certainly," said the priest, almost a mere youth, only a few months from Ireland, and a countryman of the woman; "and besides I'll add a prayer of my own. What county are you from?" he queried.

"Sweet Tipperary," replied the woman, tears welling into her eyes as she caught the soft South Ireland brogue on the priest's words.

"God bless you!" said he; "so am I. Isn't this a queer country at all, at all? Sure the people have more dollars than faith, I'm thinking."

Others came, one after another, until the hour for mass.

Father Underwood now came to the place where all the vestments were laid in perfect order for the celebrant, deacon, and subdeacon to vest themselves.

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By the side of the vestments he was to wear were the lists of names of those for the repose of whose souls he was to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. For years it had been his custom to offer this mass on All Souls' Day. It is the usual custom with priests to offer the mass for the repose of those souls only whose relatives or friends had sent in some money-offering with the names, but Father Underwood never had made any exception.

He began to vest for mass, and the deacon and sub-deacon followed his example. Soon all was in readiness. The master of ceremonies gave the signal by a sharp clap of the hands; then the long line of altar boys went, two by two, through the door leading into the sanctuary of the church; then to the center of the sanctuary, where they genuflected, two by two, each of the pairs bowing to the other, then defiling to a long line of chairs arranged at right angles to the altar.

Finally the master of ceremonies, followed by sub-deacon, deacon, and celebrant, came before the altar and genuflected. Father Underwood began the mass with the words, "*Introibo ad altare Dei*," while the choir chanted the sublime "*Kyrie Eleison*" of Willcox's Requiem.

After the reading of the "*Dies Iræ*" the master of ceremonies signaled the officiating clergy to go to the large chairs at the side of the sanctuary; and there they sat while the solemn words were sung by the choir.

Father Underwood felt almost for the first time the awfulness of that judgment scene. "The day of

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wrath, that dreadful day—when the just are scarce secure.”

“Yet the gentle Master,” he pondered, “is to preside at that awful scene. He, whose dying words were, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,’ is to send the greater part of the human race to hell, and do so in such a terrible manner. ‘A day of wrath, a dreadful day.’ Is that the merciful spirit of Jesus? The dead for whom I have prayed for years—,” but the signal came from the master of ceremonies to return to the altar and resume mass.

After the Gospel had been chanted, the deacon of the mass, having divested himself of the chasuble or outer vestment, ascended the pulpit to preach the usual sermon on “Purgatory.”

“Scripture, tradition, and reason prove this doctrine,” he said; “besides there is the solemn definition of Holy Church. Happy are they who have God’s blessed light, to know they can aid their friends who have passed through the portals of the world to come. Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are well and salutary; but the greatest prayer of all is the Holy Mass, in which the Lamb of God, once offered in a bloody sacrifice, is now again offered, but in a bloodless manner, yet with all the dignity, efficacy, and power of that wonderful holocaust on Calvary’s heights.

“The greatest act in all the world occurs when a priest offers mass. In great cathedral or in lowly chapel Christ again is offered, body and blood, soul and divinity, to the Eternal Father; and in the il-limitableness of this sacrifice all men can find refreshment, light, and grace.

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“The souls of those who have gone on before are now powerless to help themselves. We should and must help them, for love, for mercy; and also with the knowledge that the same kindness which we mete out to those in purgatory will be given to us when we leave this world by death.

“Day after day we add to our burden of sin. Even the just man falls seven times a day, and few of us dare say that we are just. Confession and communion take away this guilt and burden, but through human frailty we renew this burden of sin daily and hourly.

“It was once revealed to a saint that he alone had gained a plenary indulgence on some day when nearly all the nation had approached the sacraments, and thousands of them seriously and devotedly. What hope have we—poor, frail mortals—to come before the judgment seat of God, save with an immense burden of venial sin?

“What, then, is before us save years, perhaps centuries, in purgatory to wipe away this immense debt owed to God, except some one prays for us especially by having masses said for us. Remember the words of pious Job, ‘Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, at least you my friends; for the hand of the Lord hath touched me.’ If we do not pray for our relatives and friends now in purgatory, how can we hope that when we have gone on before, those left here will remember us? As we mete out mercy to others, so shall it be measured unto us.”

The priest descended from the pulpit and, hastily throwing the chasuble over his shoulders, took his

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place as deacon of the mass, and Father Underwood continued the service.

He turned to the congregation and chanted "*Dominus vobiscum.*" The choir responded, "*Et cum spiritu tuo.*" He then intoned the "*Oramus,*" and immediately proceeded to the Offertory. Here is offered to the Most High God the bread and wine which later, through the words of consecration, will become substantially the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, true Man, true God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

The solemn moment of consecration had now arrived. All the congregation were upon their knees, and all heads were bowed to greet the coming to the altar of the Son of man. The great organ gave forth subdued, sobbing notes. There was a hush throughout the immense church that bespoke rapt adoration for the great God who is our Creator, our Savior, and our King. Suddenly Father Underwood repeated the words from John's Gospel, "*Hoc est enim corpus meum*"—"This is My body." The words were spoken so low that only the officers of the mass could hear them. At the same moment a deep, resounding gong was heard; and all that kneeling multitude bent lower and adored the great Guest whom they believed was now on the altar under the appearance of bread, but in substance Christ, true Man, true God.

The gong again sounded as Father Underwood raised high above his head the host, held between thumb and forefinger of both hands. The stillness in the auditorium seemed intensified, and was relieved

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only by the diminishing sound of the resonant gong and the low music of the organ.

Father Underwood again genuflected before the consecrated host; again the gong sounded, and, mingled with the moaning of the organ, were whispered prayers from the devotees here and there who were striking their breasts and saying, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"

As the third stroke of the gong died away there seemed to come a relief from some acute physical strain after the crucial moment had passed. Here and there could be heard the rattling sound of rosaries which were being drawn quickly through the fingers of the worshipers.

Again all was quiet, and the breathless silence seemed greater than before. The sound of the organ ceased. One might imagine some lull before a storm, or he might even fancy himself in the midst of a desert with only the blue sky above him, with leagues of sand around him, and no human being within scores of miles.

Father Underwood, holding the chalice in both hands, with his face just above it, now said, "*Hic est enim calix sanguinis mei novi testamenti*"—"This is the chalice of My blood of the New Testament"—and immediately genuflected till one knee touched the floor.

At the signal from the gong, the worshipers again strike their breasts and adore the God, who is body and blood, soul and divinity, under the form of wine, but wine no longer save in color and taste. The priests raised the chalice aloft and the marks of exterior devotion in the auditorium increased.

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At the third and last sound of the gong the congregation raised their bowed heads; some began the reading of their prayer books, while the greater number devoted their attention to their rosaries.

Father Underwood remained at the center of the altar, the other officers of the Mass moving about him in perfect order. He chanted the "*Pater Noster*," and proceeded to the priests' communion, partaking of both wafer and cup.

A long white cloth now was thrown over the altar railing. Communicants crowded up and held the cloth under their chins, lest the smallest particle of the consecrated Host inadvertently fell to the floor.

Father Underwood left the altar and came to the communion railing bearing with him a large silver vessel, filled with wafers. On his right was the deacon of the mass and on the left the subdeacon. He placed a wafer on the tongue of each communicant and said: "*Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi custodiat animam tuam in vitam aeternam. Amen.*" "May the body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve your soul to everlasting life. Amen."

The pious communicants returned to the pews, and on bended knees adored the Christ who had come. True God, true Man, He is to them, actually and really, and they worship Him as the God of Heaven and earth.

On this day especially, All Souls' Day, the faithful beg of the Christ who is thus with them, to have mercy on the souls of relatives and friends who have passed away.

"Have mercy on my poor husband's soul," prays

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the widow, "shorten his days of cruel torment in the flames of Purgatory and bring him soon to Thee, O, merciful Jesus."

"O Christ, who didst raise Lazarus from the dead, free my son from his bonds in that dungeon to which Thy justice dost consign him, and soon bring him to that place of refreshment, light, and peace that is only in Thee," prays the mother.

So wives pray for husbands, and mothers for sons, and brothers for sisters, and sisters for brothers. It is their duty to pray for those who have gone before, and their souls reach across the chasm between life and death, and touch by bonds of love those who have walked with them while on earth.

Mass was now finished. Father Underwood had descended from the altar to the sanctuary, and with others waited while the long line of altar boys came to the center as before, genuflected and passed out, two by two. Then, led by the master of ceremonies, the priests all left the sanctuary, and following them Father Underwood, the celebrant.

The candles were now extinguished one by one. The organ was playing weird, soul-stirring music, now loudly, now softly. Here and there a worshiper remained in the church, but the vast body of prayerful believers had gone.

The devotional service of All Souls' Day was over. After a few moments Father Underwood found himself alone in the sacristy. The altar boys had gone to their dressing rooms, and the other priests were concerned about various duties. He was walking up and down with many memories and many thoughts crowd-

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ing in on him. The past, those long years through which his labors in the Church had engaged him, whither had it gone? The people whom he had served, how loyal they were to him, how generous and how kind! Thus he pondered, and his mind ran quickly over the different parts of the service which he had just completed.

Then the thoughts of the preceding evening rushed over him like a flood. "God, make me strong," he cried. "Make me patient. Create in me the spirit of forgiveness."

The sexton entered to lay away the vestments which had been used in the service.

"Indeed, Father," said the worthy man, whose shrewd, twinkling eyes showed much good humor, "indeed, you 'll be in need of breakfast soon. With all the late masses you've been saying lately, I should think you 'd forget how to eat. Fasting is beyond me. Mary Ellen has my coffee and toast the first thing in the morning, or I 'm no use for the day. But I 'll venture the cook has something good for you ready this minute. You are the apple of the old lady's eye. She says you are one age with her son Peter, who is in Alaska making piles of money. He never sends a cent of it, anyway, to his poor old mother. A fine congregation we had to-day, Father, and no wonder, with the day like a dream."

Father Underwood soon made his way from the sacristy to the priests' refectory. It was just noon, the hour for luncheon.

He heard the laughing, jovial voices of those inside, hesitated a moment, then entered.

CHAPTER III.

The Return of the Traveler.

For several days all had been bustle and confusion in the parish hall of St. Carmel's Church. Monsignor Michael Montrose, the rector of the parish, had just returned after a long stay abroad. He had spent many months in Rome representing the archdiocese in the vast interests involved in the Pious Fund litigation. In recognition of his eminent services Archbishop Boylston, his archbishop, had petitioned the Holy See that Father Montrose, his favorite, be raised to the monsignorate, and accordingly this honor was conferred on him.

For nearly twenty years Montrose had been rector of St. Carmel's, though for nearly the past decade all the care of the parish had fallen on Father Underwood, his senior having spent much of the time out of the country on long vacations or in prosecuting special diplomatic work for the good of the Church.

When Doctor Boylston had come many years before to be coadjutor archbishop, *cum jure successionis*, to Cardinal Sanchez, he had noticed the young priest Montrose among those who came to welcome him. It was at a grand reception tendered by the cardinal and the priests of the archdiocese to the newly-made prel-

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ate. Something in the appearance of the levite attracted the archbishop.

"Who is that priest who last spoke to me, or rather, for what is he remarkable?" he inquired of Sanchez. "His eye is as keen as a sun-flash on the ice."

The old archbishop's genial face at once grew cold and sharp.

"O, his name is Montrose, as he says," he rejoined. "He is a young Irish priest with a Scotch name, and in speech and ideas is more of an Englishman than anything else."

"I'm sure," continued Boylston, "that young man will do much for Holy Church. He reminds me of the diplomats who attend the pope in Rome."

The elder man gave a piercing glance at his associate.

"Do not trust in appearances too much," said he. "I can tell you this, for I am old and you are young." Having said this he took up his rosary beads as if to begin his prayers, but really to put an end to further conversation on Montrose.

The new archbishop felt that Sanchez, being a Portuguese and a friar, was prejudiced against the nattily dressed, up-to-date priest, whose well-chosen words fell from his lips in a manner that would not have seemed ill at the papal court, nor anywhere else, indeed, be it never so cultured.

Cardinal Sanchez soon resigned and Boylston reigned in his stead.

The new archbishop far surpassed his predecessor in most of the qualities which make for success in the world, but he was not a keen judge of men. Favorites

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came and went, for he had too closely at heart the welfare of mother Church to retain in a high position any man once he had discovered his inability or unworthiness. Archbishop Boylston's "mistakes" soon became a byword in Rome through Church litigation, in which he was engaged almost continually. It was an open secret that Boylston would never be a cardinal. "Lacks accurate judgment," was the reason given.

With the departure of his former superior, Father Montrose began to ascend the ecclesiastical ladder. The parish of St. Carmel was created for him. Each rector who had lost a part of his parish to make a new parish for the archbishop's *protégé* grumbled in vain. Montrose was made irremovable rector, and was thought to be well on his way to the miter. When the question, however, of a bishopric for him was mooted at Rome, it was found that Cardinal Sanchez, who was still living in the Sacred City, had made representations to the Prefect of the Propaganda which settled forever the question on that score. A bishop, like Cæsar's wife, must be beyond suspicion.

Archbishop Boylston made a supreme effort to have the ban removed, but failed. Cardinal Sanchez had invoked the influence of the Superior General of his order, and Boylston was notified officially that he must not propose again Montrose's name for any vacant bishopric.

Father Montrose grew restless and discontented. Though a popular lecturer and a powerful pulpit orator he seldom spoke in public, and very rarely in his own Church.

Archbishop Boylston's interest in him and friend-

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ship for him continued unabated. Since he could not make Montrose a bishop, he made him his special diplomatic agent in Washington and also abroad, and allowed him to spend years away from the diocese.

Father Montrose was now at home, and this was the evening of the reception which Father Underwood had prepared for him. Father Underwood was here, there, and everywhere, seeing that all the machinery of the reception might move smoothly. Now he was behind the scenes to note if all the talent were present, now giving some directions to the ushers and stopping to greet a friend.

Peter Bradley, the sexton, was much in evidence, and felt that he was an important personage at the function. Peter was a philosopher, as well as a bell ringer. As he surveyed the throngs which were coming into the hall, he slyly remarked to one of the ushers: "Sure, the best way to get popular is to go away and stay away, then come back again. Here's Father Underwood, who toils day and night to keep these people in the way they should go, and nary a reception does he get. I wouldn't mind carrying chairs up into the hall for him and getting a backache. Father Montrose spends two years away to one he spends here, and the whole parish is rushing to the hall to-night to get a glimpse of him. He has an eye in his head that bores into your soul like a gimlet."

"But," interposed the usher, "Monsignor is one of the kindest of men, and a perfect gentleman. At the governor's reception two years ago he bore himself like a prince, though all the time he was the most approachable man there."

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"A bit too nice he is," rejoined Bradley, "and, indeed, whoever is the better for his smooth talk and ways? I wonder now he is a monsignor if his purple necktie will change his looks. It is little enough like a priest he ever seemed to me. Now, my young friend," he continued, "a bit of advice. When any one drops words as plentiful as raindrops, as sweet as honey, and as smooth as velvet, and always says 'yes' when you want him to, then take care that you measure carefully the yard of goods he sells you."

Suddenly the sexton saw two fashionably attired ladies enter the hall, one tall and beautiful, with a somewhat grave, yet kindly and sympathetic face; while the other was smaller in stature, somewhat more showily dressed, and lively of manner. They stood for a few moments in the back of the hall and conversed in low tones.

"Do you see that tall lady there?" asked the sexton. "Her name is Miss van Allston. She lives in Fifth Avenue, New York, when she is at home. I am a special friend of hers, even if I do say it. I drove her carriage six years when I lived in the East, and I would have been doing so yet except my poor father and mother were here and needed my care. It is four years since I left, and every Christmas she sends me my Christmas present just as when I drove her coach, and no small gift it is, either. She is a jewel, with a heart like holy saints themselves. I wonder why she is here to-night. She is no Catholic. I suppose the one with her brought her along. They say that one used to live in New York, too. Her name is Mrs. Stoddard, and she comes nearly every day to

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see Father Underwood, and how her chatter must annoy the poor man! Whenever I meet her in the hall, she turns up her nose at me as if I was a snail in the dirt. Some say she has money, but Miss van Allston's father was a banker when he lived, and had money enough to buy all San Francisco nearly, if he wanted it. Miss van Allston has been here only a week, and would you like to see the letter she wrote me?"

"Certainly," replied the usher, with a patient, though somewhat long-suffering manner. He read the letter and returned it to the sexton.

"Did you notice," said Peter, "that she calls me her friend and writes me to call on her as if I was somebody? She is the right kind, I tell you, and I've seen all kinds."

The parishioners now were crowding in, and the usher left to see about seating them.

Father Underwood came to the rear of the hall, and Mrs. Stoddard impulsively called to him:

"Father, I want you to meet Miss van Allston, an old friend of mine from New York."

The priest turned slightly pale, but replied in firm, even tones, "Miss van Allston and I have already met."

"Yes, Father Underwood and I knew each other many years ago, when we were scarcely more than children," added Miss van Allston. "A few days ago I had a visit with him at the parish house, though I did not know I was to have that pleasure when I called. I had heard nothing of him for many years, and did not know that he was near."

Mrs. Stoddard looked up wonderingly, and was

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about to speak when a clamor of voices at the door arrested the attention of all. Monsignor Montrose, attended by a number of priests, appeared and walked slowly up the main aisle toward the platform. The immense audience rose to its feet in deference to the newly-made prelate.

The observer would say that Montrose was good to look on. Of medium height, erect carriage, broad shoulders, he stepped along as one who knows well the ground on which he treads. His pale, finely-molded face was handsome. The keen, steel-gray eyes were beaming with cordidity, and with graceful, feather-like movements he acknowledged, by a wave of the hand to right or to the left, the salutations of friends who bowed to him as he passed up the aisle.

The people were proud that so able, so eloquent, and so distinguished a man was their pastor, and they gave him a royal welcome at the reception.

The master of ceremonies led him to the middle of the stage, seated him in a large arm-chair, and grouped the visiting priests around him.

The people applauded him vociferously. Time and time again he arose and bowed his acknowledgments. Finally the program of the evening began. Musical selections, vocal and instrumental, with recitations, serious and humorous, made up the numbers.

When all was ended Monsignor Montrose arose to express his pleasure at meeting the members of the parish, and to thank them for their kind greeting. They were ever first in his thoughts, he told them. Though duty and obedience and weighty interests of Mother Church often might call him far away from

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them, yet his greatest happiness was the thought of his own parish and its people, and his never-failing desire was to labor better for them. He then asked them for their prayers, and promised to remember them every day at mass.

The master of ceremonies announced that Monsignor Montrose would stand at the head of the main aisle and greet the parishioners as they came forward. To avoid confusion, let all retire by the side aisles.

The monsignor welcomed his people with a hearty handshake as they came forward, and said a few words of good-will to those whom he remembered.

Mrs. Stoddard led forward her friend, Miss van Allston, and introduced her to Montrose. He saw at once that she was not of the same world as the most of his people, and that she was not of their faith. Instantly he was the polished man of the world, apparently thoroughly at home with any subject. Miss van Allston remarked that she nearly envied him his long stay in Rome, that home of art and artists. At once he spoke of some beautiful engravings which he had brought home with him, and invited her to come to his library and view them.

"We Americans follow the mighty dollar so much that a little time spent with art will serve as an oasis in the desert," said he. "If you have time this evening, I should be most happy to show you many interesting and beautiful things which I felt myself very fortunate to obtain. I want both you and Mrs. Stoddard to see them."

Miss van Allston accepted the invitation, and acknowledged her appreciation of the treat in store.

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While she and Montrose were speaking, Mrs. Stoddard had slipped away to Father Underwood who, absorbed in his own reflections, stood by a bank of palms, apparently oblivious to what was passing around him.

"Where have you seen Miss van Allston before?" she asked abruptly of him, "and why did you look and act so strangely when you saw her this evening?"

She restrained herself by an effort, and an onlooker would have thought that she was speaking of some of the commonplaces of the day.

The priest looked absently at her.

"You never look at any one else as you looked at her—and I—we—think of you and—and—pray for you almost every moment of the day."

"Look at any one else—" said the priest.

"Yes, yes," she said almost passionately. "You should not look at any one like that, except—except—indeed, you should not look at any one like that."

The priest seemed almost unconscious of her presence.

"I was not aware of anything strange in my behavior," he finally said, then added musingly:

"Miss van Allston and I knew each other long ago, and until within a few days we had not met for many years."

Just then Monsignor Montrose came toward them, having Miss van Allston with him.

"I've met all the people and I am taking Miss van Allston into the house to see some rare engravings which I brought home with me," said he. "We have counted on your coming also, Mrs. Stoddard, and you must come too, Father Underwood. I wish to enjoy

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my lions with you all. I have some notable ones, I assure you. I would not take a duke's ransom for any of them. I have also some paintings from Borghese collection. It's a great treat."

So speaking he conducted them down the long staircase which led from the hall directly into the parish house, and opened a door with his pass-key. His guests found themselves in his private library. Bookcases filled with rare and exquisite volumes were on every side of the large room, while curious statues and pictures filled much of the unoccupied space.

"When away," said the monsignor, "I send my discoveries and acquisitions here, and Father Underwood places them for me just where I wish them. I carry the geography of this room everywhere in my mind's eye, and I often transport myself hither in spirit and fairly revel in my treasures as a miser does in his gold. When I am away Father Underwood alone has access here."

He stopped before a bookcase.

"See these volumes!" said he. "They are forty-five in number, and are complete works of the Jansenist Arnould. I doubt if there are five other sets complete in all Europe. These belonged to the Borghese library, and only the most extraordinary chances in my favor enabled me to procure them. Of course they are under the ban of the Church, yet many excellent things are contained in them. Mazella and others of our theologians copy from them wholesale.

"This, by the way," stopping before an image of Christ on the cross, "is a Jansenist crucifix. You will notice that the arms of the Savior are not outstretched,

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as is the case with our crucifixes, but nearly touch together above the head. The idea is, salvation for the few and eternal ruin for everybody else, a very popular Jansenist notion, and unfortunately popular in many other quarters also. With us, of course, the arms of Christ are widely outstretched to embrace all humanity, if they will but come to Him. This is truly the Christian idea.

“Here,” stopping before a large painting, “is a copy of the Madonna di San Sisto. The original is in the Dresden gallery, and was painted by Raphael in 1518. I have spent hours before the painting, and have returned again and again to look my fill at it. It charms me. It fairly enchants me. I consider it to be infinitely superior to the Blenheim Madonna, which sold for seventy thousand pounds. This copy has quite a history. The picture itself is over two hundred years old, though the frame is of my own designing. During the Reign of Terror the picture was the property of a noble family in Paris. It already had been in their possession fully a century. The painter had been a famous man in his generation, and the picture was highly prized. The mob, on breaking into the palace where this family was living, sought to destroy every vestige of religion and art to be found; but the daughter of the family cut this picture from the frame and hid it in her dress. Afterwards she escaped to England, but hardship and poverty could not induce her to dispose of the treasure.

“A certain Englishman of high connection and great wealth wished to purchase the picture from her, as he was a lover of beautiful things, but she still re-

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tained it. Finally acquaintance ripened into friendship, and friendship into a deeper feeling. The young French refugee finally married the Englishman, and the Madonna was added to his collection. For nearly a hundred years the picture was in England, until the last member of the family died leaving no heir. Then a continental buyer secured the picture and held it for me, and now it is in my library."

"Indeed, a truly romantic history," exclaimed Miss van Allston. "How you must appreciate the possession of the picture!"

"I do indeed," replied the monsignor.

"Here," he continued, "are some engravings of the Madonna della Sedia. I also have a copy made nearly three hundred years ago; but see how perfect these engravings are! How such things would have astonished the old painters themselves! One is tempted to appreciate the engraving almost more than the painting," said he, with a smile.

"Here again," he went on, "is an engraving of Correggio's Reading Magdalen. The original is in the Dresden gallery. It is only twelve inches high and fifteen inches wide. The story goes that it was formerly kept in the golden chamber of the castle of Modena, was set in silver frame, adorned with precious stones, and shown on state occasions only."

Thus Montrose passed from one set of engravings to another, or from one picture to another. He seemed altogether at home in art and literature, in statecraft or diplomacy. From his long residence in Rome and other parts of Italy he seemed to have caught the Latin habit of gesticulation, and his even, noiseless

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tread joined in smoothly with his graceful speech and polished manner. Stories, epigrams, descriptions followed one another in rapid succession, and his hearers marveled at the priest's versatility.

"Here," said he, "we have the Vatican gallery."

Engravings of Raphael's Transfiguration and The Coronation of the Virgin are shown; then Domenichino's Communion of St. Jerome. Following these came Paolo Veronese, Fra Angelico, Titian, Guido, and many others.

Over an hour passed in the library before the ladies were ready to go. The charm and culture of the monsignor, as if by some subtle influence, seemed to magnetize his hearers. Father Underwood had listened as eagerly as the others.

"Father Underwood must make the next trip to Rome and Paris and the other great European centers," said Montrose. "He deserves a vacation, and I know of no one who would make better use of the opportunities afforded him. I can give him letters of introduction which will be valuable over there. Tomorrow I'll speak to the archbishop about a long vacation for him. It has been all work and no play for him for years."

Father Underwood disclaimed any desire for such a vacation, but the prelate playfully waved aside his objections.

"'Obey your superior officers,' is the watchword of Holy Church," said he.

The ladies preceded the men to the door, which Montrose opened for them with the grace of a Chesterfield.

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When on the street, Mrs. Stoddard, who had been rather silent in the house, began to speak reflectively.

"What a strange influence Monsignor Montrose produces on one," said she. "I could almost fancy myself in some Oriental grove with the incense and incantations of pagan priests lulling me into forgetfulness or a hypnotic sleep or some such thing."

"Really," rejoined Miss van Allston, "I thought him a most interesting gentleman, with distinguished manners, such as one rarely sees. I very much enjoyed the evening in his library."

Mrs. Stoddard was silent for a few moments.

"Father Underwood seems to me to be an ideal priest," she said finally. "but I can not believe that nature and Providence intended him for the Church. He is so thoughtful and generous and kind. I often think what a loving, devoted husband and fond father he would have made. I wonder if ever he has a longing for a home with children and a sweet, affectionate wife. I do not believe he can crowd such thoughts from his heart, though he be never so priestly and under such a load of vows. I can not think it is in his nature to do so. It is all well for Monsignor Montrose, who, I do believe, might be one of the Borgias, even if he wished. But Father Underwood, Father Underwood! how can he so content himself!"

Mrs. Stoddard did not notice that her companion was preoccupied—almost sad.

"I know really very little about the Catholic Church," was Miss van Allston's only reply to her friend as their ways parted for the night.

CHAPTER IV.

The Story of Her Life.

THE next evening Father Underwood found on his desk a note from Mrs. Stoddard, asking him to call on her as soon as possible at her home in Fillmore Street. Something about the words led him to think that she was ill or in some trouble, so he went to her without delay.

He walked along Van Ness Avenue as far as the Catholic cathedral of St. Mary's at O'Farrell Street, where he turned and proceeded thereon till he reached Fillmore Street, which he followed to Mrs. Stoddard's residence.

The servant admitting him seemed to expect him, asking him to step to her mistress's private sitting room.

A very striking room it was.

A sumptuous Oriental couch, piled with many pillows of warm, luxurious coloring, occupied nearly one side of the apartment. Above the couch was draped a canopy of rich embroidered stuffs in deep reds, soft brown, golden yellows, splendid greens.

On the opposite side, artistically built of rough, dark-colored clinker brick, was a huge fireplace, in which a bright wood fire was blazing.

On the floor was a magnificent Turkish rug of the same general tints as the couch and canopy, all

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blending into one harmonious color effect. Low, broad-seated chairs were placed about the room.

On a small, curiously-carved table there stood a quaint candelabrum, through the dark shades of which a soft light diffused itself everywhere. Not far from the table a large vase of Satsuma ware was filled with gorgeous yellow and white chrysanthemums.

A large Angora cat softly purring by the side of the open fire completed the picture of luxury and ease.

Mrs. Stoddard was half reclining on the couch as Father Underwood entered, and she greeted him without rising.

"Why, are you ill?" he asked her. "You seemed so well only last evening."

"Yes, Father, I am ill, ill indeed—at heart."

The priest seated himself near her and looked down on her sympathizingly. The unexpected happenings of the past few days, happenings which had reopened pages in his life, which he long had thought closed, had greatly increased the sympathy and compassion of his already generous and kindly nature.

After a pause, Mrs. Stoddard said: "I have something to tell you, Father. Yet why should I tell this to you, who are a priest and to whom the world of marriage is an unknown one, who can not know of either the happiness which may be found in marriage, nor of the pain there is in a marriage loveless and childless. Nevertheless I wish to make you my confidant, and have asked you to come here where there will be no interruption."

"Your confidence does me honor, Mrs. Stoddard, and I am gladly at your service."

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"You are very kind. Thank you," she said, and commenced her narrative.

"I have never known father's care nor mother's love. My parents died when I had seen only a few months of life. I was reared in the household of my great-uncle, who gave much of his time to the practice of his religion, but very little to the lonely orphan within his gate.

"When yet a very little girl I was placed in a convent, which was my home for many years. So I lived till my eighteenth year, when my uncle came to call on me. I had not seen him for about ten years. He told me that he had arranged a marriage for me with a representative of an old and wealthy family. The marriage was to take place within a few weeks. The man who was to become my husband would call on me the following day. 'While much older than I,' my uncle said, 'he was a worthy man and an exemplary Catholic.'

"I raved, I wept and stormed, but my relative was as unheeding as a pillar of stone. He told me that he had done his part by my mother when she had married my father, and that what remained of his property should go, when he died, to some monastery.

"The next day the man whom I was to marry came. He was nearly as old as my great-uncle, and in many ways much like him. The Mother Superior told me, when he had departed, that it was my duty to obey my kind relative and marry this most excellent gentleman. 'All the nuns,' she said, 'would pray for my happiness and prosperity.'

"What could I do but consent to it all. Shortly

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after our marriage we moved to New York, where for ten years I lived as the wife of that man. I grew almost to hate him, his cast-iron virtues and his inflexible goodness. Every night he had prayers in the house, and every servant must be present. Every morning each one in the house must hear mass. There was no pleasure, no happiness in that home—if it was a home. Surely it was never so to me.

“Finally, about three years ago, my husband died. He had left one-fourth of his property to be expended in masses for the repose of his soul; a second fourth to a Carmelite monastery. The residue was willed to me.

“My health and the imperative orders of my physician now compelled me to spend a number of months here in California, where I first met Miss van Allston. When I recovered I returned to New York.

“Nearly two years elapsed before I could dispose of my interests there, then I left associations which had become unendurable to me because of the strange, unnatural life I had been compelled to live. I came to San Francisco, and to this house wherein I am now living.

“I have spoken of an unhappy childhood and of a loveless and childless marriage. Add to this a forlorn widowhood, and you have my life history.”

Father Underwood’s voice was full of sympathy as he said:

“My dear lady, your lot in life has been hard indeed. I wish there was something that I could say or do that would make life happier for you.”

“You are so good, I know, Father.”

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"Is there not some way I can help you? I will do anything," said the priest, earnestly.

"Father, do you mean it?"

"Indeed, yes. My greatest pleasure comes from comforting those whose lives like yours are empty of happiness."

"O! Is that all?"

Father Underwood showed some surprise as he replied, "And is not that a worthy purpose?"

Mrs. Stoddard looked abstractedly into the fire, and did not speak for several minutes. Father Underwood began to fear that something he had said might have offended her.

Suddenly she said irrelevantly, "Where did you know Miss van Allston before?"

The priest started almost imperceptibly, then changed positions before replying.

"I first knew Miss van Allston when she was quite a young girl."

"Were you living in California at the time? I understand that Miss van Allston was born and reared in the East."

"I was living in the East at the time. California is my native State, but I attended Harvard, and it was in my freshman year that I met Miss van Allston. Later I finished in the University at Berkeley the course which I had begun there."

"O, so long ago as that? Long before you were a priest?"

"Yes."

"I have known Miss van Allston quite intimately for some time. Well do I remember the circumstances

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of our meeting," said Mrs. Stoddard, reminiscently, "for through her I was given my first glimpse of happiness. I might say, my only glimpse.

"It was the winter following my husband's death when the doctor ordered the change for me. I came to Santa Barbara. Miss van Allston and I first met at the Potter Hotel. Our rooms were directly across the hall from each other, and we were much together. Her genial, kindly nature seemed to impart itself to every one, and I was no exception.

"I shall always remember the day when our friendship first ripened into intimacy. We had been invited to partake of a genuine Spanish dinner at the home of an old Castilian lady in East Cañon Perdita Street. This was a great treat to us, and under Miss van Allston's magic touch it was made a most memorable day to all. She was almost like a joyous, happy child, and we caught her spirit. I shall never forget the day.

"After we became more and more acquainted, she asked me to join her on a visit to Coronado Beach. Life held very little of interest to me, but I consented, though not with much enthusiasm, as it was with difficulty that I could arouse myself from the lethargy in which I was.

"We went by boat from Santa Barbara to Coronado. As soon as we had embarked Miss van Allston put her hands on my shoulder, and told me that she was going to drive dull care away from me for the whole trip, and she did. The journey was delightful, and ended all too soon.

"We stopped at Hotel Coronado, which is close to the beach, and we bathed in the surf every day. I

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became rapidly better. The physician said it was the surf bathing, but I knew it was Miss van Allston."

"A good laugh is better than medicine, and a good friend is better than either," commented Father Underwood.

Mrs. Stoddard nodded assent, and went on:

"The day before we left Coronado we took a drive which I shall remember always. It was by carriage to Tia Juana, Mexico, not a very great distance. It was a charming drive. For several miles the driveway runs along the ocean, and a great part of the distance on the very beach. It was grand.

"At Tia Juana we went into the arena where real bull-fights are held. Think of it! We also visited the little adobe church where mass is said only two or three times a year, that day happening to be one of the few times. We met the little Spanish priest there and talked with him, he in Spanish and we in English. Miss van Allston said, 'What does it matter that he does not understand us nor we him. We exchanged greetings at least.' She also said that there are many conversations as little understood by either side as was this, even when carried on in the same language. Miss van Allston is not often ironical."

"You must have had very pleasant times together," remarked Father Underwood. "Did you visit any of the old missions during your stay in Southern California?"

"Yes, several of them, and the Padres interest me. Were they not noble men?"

"Noble men, indeed," replied he. "That grand old Franciscan, Junipero Serra, is one of my heroes.

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He came into that wilderness as long ago as 1769 and founded a mission near the present San Diego. This was the southern end of the chain of missions which reached north of San Francisco. The old Camino Real—the King's Highway—ran from mission to mission. That road was made blessed by the feet of saints. Serra and his companions trod it from end to end and back again, many times. There were giants in those days. What devotion, what nobility, those men showed who gave their lives and thoughts to the welfare of their savage brothers!”

Mrs. Stoddard did not seem greatly interested just at this time in the subject of missions, and rather abruptly interposed:

“Now, Father, I have given you, among other things, quite an extended account of my acquaintance with Miss van Allston. Suppose you tell me of your acquaintance with her?”

“Miss van Allston interests you very much, does she not?” asked he.

“Yes, very much, and more than ever—now. You knew her in the East then?”

“Yes.”

“And you were a student at Harvard at that time?”

“Yes.”

“Was she the same then as now?” queried Mrs. Stoddard.

“Yes. Miss van Allston was a very beautiful, young girl, with an equally beautiful character.”

“Did she have a happy childhood and girlhood, or was it like mine?”

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"From her earliest years she was loved and cared for tenderly. An only child, her parents lavished all their affection on her, yet no amount of devotion could mar the sweet beauty of her soul. She was a generous, happy, loving girl. Would that I might have shielded her from all that followed," half absently replied Father Underwood.

"What?" asked Mrs. Stoddard, in half exclamation.

"For one of her nature and training it must have been—excuse me, Mrs. Stoddard, we were speaking of your life."

"No, Father, we were speaking of Miss van Allston."

Father Underwood did not seem disposed to continue this subject. After a pause, she gave a little sigh and said:

"O, Father, I am very unhappy. Can you not give me some of the peace and contentment of your own heart?"

"Anything in my power I will do for you, but what you ask can come to us from the hand of God alone."

"But are you never lonely, Father?"

"If we live in the presence of God we are never alone?"

"Yes, Father, I know—but I mean human companionship."

"Each heart knows its own sorrows," replied he, "but be assured that henceforth I shall think of you and pray for you as never before."

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"Thank you, Father. Your words are all the world to me."

Father Underwood rose to go.

"O Father, are you going so soon?"

"It is getting late."

"O, please stay—I had so much to say to you—I have hardly begun."

"Really," he replied, looking at his watch, "it is quite late. I think I must go."

She made an impulsive movement as if to detain him forcibly, then partly turned away, then again turning to him and almost hysterically grasping his hand.

"O Father, you do not care, I am nothing to you. Can you not see?—*can* you not see?—I am so unhappy—so lonely—just a few words from you would bring such comfort to me—you are so strong and so—"

She paused and turned toward the fire, took a step away from him, then looked intently up into his face. She read no response in his eyes, neither did his lips give any reply to her words. She straightened herself passionately and began:

"My God, Father, have you no heart? You look down from your superior and peaceful heights with nothing but scorn for us poor mortals whose lives are tragedies, and who yet must live on and on, stifling our hearts, stifling our love, yes, even stifling our hate—all—all the promptings of nature held in submission, while people such as you look calmly down on us and say, 'Poor creatures, we will pray for you.' Prayer! True prayer is action, something done, something said to make a life happier, something—"

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Father Underwood began to speak, but she hastily said:

"Do not interrupt me. I will finish—I will—you have never been tried—have never had the depths of your nature stirred—your life has been one long, unbroken calm—what you know of life has been gleaned from the sufferings of others, from the experiences of others. It is not right, not just, that some should suffer, while others—" She paused, threw herself on the couch, hiding her face in the cushions, her whole frame shaking with the violence of her emotions. The priest stepped to her side.

"My dear Mrs. Stoddard, anything in my power I will do for you. Surely you must know this. Your sorrow is mine." He placed his hand on her shoulder. She reached out her hand as if to take his, but met no answering movement.

"It is well enough to talk—any one can do that," she exclaimed.

"Mrs. Stoddard, does your knowledge of me justify your remarks? Do I not try to make my daily life one of action as well as of prayer? You know you have but to command me, and I will do my utmost to promote your welfare and peace and happiness. Could one do more?"

Suddenly her sobs ceased. She turned toward him and began violently:

"Father Underwood, you will never—" She met his clear, earnest gaze, and her words refused to be uttered. For several moments they looked into each other's eyes, and it was she who broke the silence.

"Forgive me, Father, I can not be myself to-night.

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I had hoped so much—O, go; go—now! Some other time, perhaps, I shall be calmer, and I will say what I wished to say to-night, but could not—I do not know why. Good-night, Father!”

Without further remark he bade her good-night and set forth homeward.

After he left she walked the floor, back and forth, till she sank to a chair from very exhaustion. After a little she fell into deep thought.

“Does he care?” she pondered. “No; and yet he told me that he will think of me as never before—think of me—yes—but think of me and pray for me. Alas! yes—and pray for me. If only he had not said that. It is merely what he might have said to a waif—to think of and pray for one—and yet he said ‘as never before.’ Can it be that he reads my heart and feels a response in his own? No—yes—no.

“He is so gentle and good and kind. Can he be content in the lonely life he leads, with no woman’s smile to cheer him? He said—yes, he surely said, ‘Anything in my power I will do for you; command me;’ and again, ‘Each heart knows its own sorrow.’ That must mean something—he is lonely—”

She again moved restlessly around the room; finally she drew aside the curtain and looked out on a wild and stormy night.

“I must speak the secret of my heart to some one!” she exclaimed. “I will confide in Miss van Allston. She is the only one to whom I ever would dream of telling this. She is my friend—and his. She will understand. She will be true. I must see her.”

She suddenly turned. “Heaven protect me! This

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very night Miss van Allston was to leave for Los Angeles, not to return for two weeks." Frantically she hastened to the telephone. Miss van Allston had already been gone two hours. "What shall I do? It seems as if my heart must burst if I do not unburden it, and at once!" Again she paced the floor. "I must wait. Yet how can I!"

Again she went to the window.

"Ah, well! I am accustomed to waiting."

CHAPTER V.

An Unwelcome Discovery.

STRETCHING ahead of us, as we journey through the valley of Time, may be seen the milestones of Eternity. The number of these milestones remaining to each one can be determined by the sun of life as it approaches its meridian or recedes from it.

Some men march on with the stately, steady tread of the Roman soldiery, measuring carefully rise and declivity, valley, defile, and mountain; noting with watchful eye the stadia from camp to camp until the final goal is reached. From that goal, where eternity begins, they see, ever gleaming, the beauteous light which is reflected from the face of God. Faint echoes of celestial music greet their ears as the angels attune their harps and voices in pæans of joyous praise to the Most High. With the eyes of the soul such favored ones look even on the face of God Himself, and ever worship Him at the altar of the heart.

Other men forget the great secret of existence and follow day by day the path of ambition, of pleasure, or of sin. They venture far afield till precipice or morass bids them pause. They return, not as from a harvest, bearing their sheaves with them; but with empty hands, from a futile quest.

Monsignor Michael Montrose long had labored in

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Holy Mother Church. Of vast, intricate machinery she is, with arms that reach around the world. Her searchlights sweep from pole to pole. A thousand idioms proclaim her dictate, "Christ's other self am I, and if ye hear me ye hear Him."

Monsignor Montrose often had dreamed that one day he would find himself beside the Fisherman's throne, and with his own hand hold a lever, to the slightest move of which response would follow even from the uttermost bounds of the earth. Often had he wished that he had lived in other days, when a Mazarine or Ximenes could rule emperors and princes.

He longed to be an Antonelli, or yet a Manning. Then he would awaken from his dream and remember that it was denied him to be even a bishop, even in some obscure missionary district where bishoprics went a-begging. He raved at fate, and called down imprecations on the head of the venerable Cardinal Sanchez.

Montrose finally decided to return to far-off San Francisco. He felt that here his skill in ecclesiastical diplomacy would make him the most prominent figure in the circles of his Church. His influence with Archbishop Boylston he knew would be great.

Again, Montrose felt that he could be a power in the secular politics of the Queen of the Pacific. He would not couch politics directly; but he believed he had within him the power to control the leaders of these politics, and through them the municipality itself.

First, he must appear before the people of what he now called his home city as a zealous, capable

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parish priest; and, using his parish as a nucleus, little by little add to it other parts of the city till all would be within his domination. He saw, in anticipation, the religious and secular power reposing in the hollow of his hand. The ancient Cardinal Sanchez in far-away Rome would forget him. He imagined himself at last a power intrenched and impregnable, as had been the great St. Cyril, in Alexandria, centuries before. Better to rule in San Francisco than to live baffled and beaten in Imperial Rome, even though she is the mother of diplomacy, the mistress of the arts, the spiritual dictator of the world.

So, after his long absence, Monsignor Montrose had returned to San Francisco and his parish. His coming, with the expressed intention of remaining in the parish, was greeted by the archbishop with unfeigned joy. The diplomatic and executive talents of his subordinate long had been the wonder and admiration of the archbishop.

Moreover, Monsignor Montrose was to him as one whose light had been hidden by those who should have exalted that light to the mountain tops. Furthermore, Montrose was a martyr to obedience, for he had accepted with resigned heart and words of filial piety the rebukes and disappointments heaped on him by those who should have seen in him a living example of Christlike virtue and courage. Were there not letters in the archbishop's desk, written by Montrose under the keenest stress of unmerited rebuff, which breathed charity and forgiveness and the Master's spirit even as he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?"

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Archbishop Boylston thought also that Montrose would help him by act and advice in his own dealings with the Roman curia, the apostolic delegation at Washington, and with his brother bishops.

The monsignor diligently set to work to win the hearts of the people of St. Carmel's parish. First he delivered a series of powerful sermons on the fundamental doctrines of his Church. With the clearness and eloquence of a Chrysostom he set forth the claims of the Holy Father at Rome that he is Peter's successor and holds the keys of the Kingdom of God; and that he is infallible in matters appertaining to faith and morals. This he supplemented with several splendid lectures on the temporal power of the pope. He then demonstrated the Real Presence of Christ—body, blood, and divinity—in the altar bread, after the words of consecration by the priest. Finally he gave a number of instructions on the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church.

The people were dazzled by his eloquence and puzzled by his learning. They were proud of his eminent abilities, but withal were somewhat displeased by his masterful addresses. The sexton, Peter Bradley, expressed something of their sentiments when he naively said: "Sure, does he think we're heathens or out-and-out Protestants? Do n't we believe all our Church teaches, without all these sermons, each an hour and a half long, to tell us? Sure, indeed, if we did n't know, is it the Very Reverend Monsignor who would have taught us while he was away in them strange Eyetalian places, taking tea with cardinals and lords and dukes and ladies?"

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The keen ears of Montrose soon heard of Bradley's remarks, and the sexton was discharged at once. This increased the dissatisfaction with Montrose. Flatterers and followers he had, but his intuition told him that the great heart of his people was not with him.

He looked about him for the cause of this. He no more doubted his ability to win the people of St. Carmel's than he questioned his own existence. To his great wonderment, he found that the people preferred Father Underwood's sermons to his own. Underwood attempted no great flights of oratory nor studied elegance, but from the fullness of his heart spoke of faith in God, and of honesty, honor, and truth among men. He spoke as one might who walked in spirit with the Savior, who had looked on His face and listened to His words. He had stood like adamant against vice and wrong; had devoted himself to save the weak and tempted from themselves even. The good found in him a powerful impulse to yet better and nobler things; the sinful man or woman found him a mighty, spiritual strength on which they might lean until their feet found firmer and truer paths.

Such men as Underwood preach always as they pray always, for the very essence of their lives is prayer and noble impulse to others.

On Saturdays, and at other times when confessions were heard, Father Underwood's confessional was thronged, while very few availed themselves of Monsignor Montrose's ministrations. He would often sit for hours, and no one would come to kneel at his feet and pour forth the heart's secrets.

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The monsignor never had dreamed of such an obstacle as this. Men and women in the most enlightened circles of Europe had fed on his words. Why should not the simple folk of his own parish crowd around him to receive the words of life?

That Father Underwood should be sent to some other field of activity now was determined by the monsignor. He was too clever a practitioner, however, to allow any intimation of his desire to become public. Why should he incur the ill-will of either Underwood or of the parishioners?

"I'll have him sent to some other part of the diocese—to some hitherto neglected country parish. Let him show his zeal and activity there," was the monsignor's thought. "I must proceed very diplomatically. It may take time, but it must be done. A vacation, perhaps, would ease the way to his dismissal from here. I could have his place acceptably filled before his return, and the country parish would follow as a matter of course. A grand farewell reception, the usual sorrowing parishioners, the regulation well-filled purse, and then the people will forget him, and I'll have them for my own."

Monsignor Montrose found that Father Underwood had very fixed opinions on the subject of a vacation. He gently but firmly declined the monsignor's offer to obtain for him from the archbishop permission to go abroad for a year, with a handsome allowance from the diocese for all his current expenses.

"I do not feel that I can spare the time to take a vacation now. Most certainly I have no inclination to do so. Rome and its great churches do not appeal

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to me as they once would have done. I do not like a great deal that I have heard of Lourdes. A pilgrimage on foot to Jerusalem, without staff or scrip, would suit my humor more nearly, if the Atlantic Ocean and custom were not in the way."

"But I think your health demands a vacation, my very dear Father Underwood," argued Monsignor Montrose.

"I never felt better in my life," replied Father Underwood,

"Yet you do not look well."

They were in Monsignor Montrose's private office and standing before the desk, facing each other. The older man reached out and placed his hand on the other's shoulder.

"You are my right arm," said he, "I hope that you and I will work together in this beloved parish for many years."

Montrose opened a large safe and took a number of documents therefrom.

"When it shall please God to call me away from this world, all that I possess is to be placed in your hands as my administrator. There are many projects herein described, some of which can not mature for years; but to the hand that manipulates them they will bring surely honor and position, for good Mother Church is not slow to recognize deeds done to promote her honor and glory."

Montrose carefully replaced the papers in his safe. Finally he said:

"If I followed the dictates of my heart I would not suggest your taking a vacation, but I must not

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be selfish. You must understand how vastly interested is Holy Church in the spiritual and intellectual advancement of such men as you. A year abroad would reveal to you mines of culture and information which you could use in the service of the Church. You have been too long here, looking at life as through a crevice in a door. Open wide the door and step forth, and see things as they appear from a more enlightened standpoint.

“What good you could do then for our dear people! How they love you! My dear Father, how it touches me to hear the words of praise for you on all sides! It would break their hearts nearly to have you away for a month even; but we must not think of ourselves, but of the welfare of the Church and your good. God knows how dear you are to me. You are like my own son.”

Here Monsignor Montrose, apparently overcome by emotion, leaned his face on his hands and wept, so greatly moved did he seem to be by the thought of even a temporary parting from his beloved friend.

Father Underwood was deeply affected by this demonstration of trust and affection. He had never quite liked Montrose, who was an enigma to him; but he now felt that he had misjudged the monsignor, who showed such thoughtfulness and generosity.

In regard to the vacation, however, Father Underwood could not be induced to change his mind.

“I can not accept your kind offer,” he said, “but I shall not forget your goodness.”

A few days later Monsignor Montrose engaged Archbishop Boylston in conversation on the subject

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of the foreign missions of the Church. He dilated on the noble work which the Society for the Propagation of the Faith was doing in all parts of the Orient. He said that some of the ablest and most experienced priests in Europe had volunteered for the work, and daily were winning souls for the Church; that this work was truly worth the best endeavors of any priest.

He then cautiously intimated that Father Underwood's experience and ability would eminently fit him for missionary work. The Orient would be, of course, out of the question; but in the diocese there were several country parishes then without a pastor, and not one of these parishes had even been visited for a number of years.

"My dear Monsignor," said Archbishop Boylston, "you certainly overrate the importance of these parishes. Your long residence abroad has led you to compare them with the great missionary districts in China and elsewhere. In all these parishes of which you speak you will find mostly deserted mining camps and abandoned mining claims. There are very few people living in the whole region, and these are mostly nomadic cowboys.

"I can not think of taking Father Underwood away from St. Carmel's. He has done noble work there, and he is one of the most capable priests in the whole diocese. When the time comes I shall give him a city parish, one close to yours, if possible, where he will be better known.

"I do not expect you to devote much time to the actual work of your parish. Leave that to Father Underwood. I need you with me at the meeting of

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the archbishops next month in Washington. You will be of great assistance to me there. When we return, which will not be for several months, I shall need your help in Sacramento. We must have the Legislature pass some bills for the relief of orphans, half-orphans, and abandoned children.

“Never fear, my dear Monsignor, I ’ll find work enough for you to do. You ’ll not suffer from *ennui* now you ’re at home. I need your help in a hundred ways.”

“Your Grace’s wish is law to me.” said the monsignor, as he kissed the archbishop’s hand at parting.

CHAPTER VI.

An Errand of Mercy.

AS FATHER UNDERWOOD entered the parish house one day about noon, the servant told him that a lady had left some flowers for him, and also word that she would call to see him that afternoon at three o'clock.

A bunch of rarest orchids lay on the table, and beside it was Mrs. Stoddard's card.

"Ah, the fairest flowers I've seen this season," said the priest. "How kind of Mrs. Stoddard to bring them to me! They are too beautiful for me to keep them selfishly in my own apartment. Maggie, take them to the dining-room and place them on the table."

At luncheon Monsignor Montrose presided in his usual graceful manner.

"We have flowers to-day, I see, as well as other good things. Unless I mistake, I have seen these flowers before, in the hands of the lady who brought them. I saw her this morning from the library window as she came to the door with them. You are fond of flowers, Father Underwood, I'm sure."

"I am a great lover of flowers, Monsignor," replied Father Underwood. "Men search heaven and

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earth for the true, the beautiful, the good. Flowers express all these. There are times when they seem to me to think and even to speak."

"Ah, Father Underwood, a poetic soul, I see! You know, then, the language of flowers. As Shakespeare says, 'Pansies for thoughts,' and the rest. What does the orchid symbolize?"

"You refer, Monsignor, to something in which I have no education. I meant the soul language—the language of the universe, in which star speaks to star, and earth to heaven."

"Yes, very beautiful, very beautiful; but it's a more practical thing to have a friend who can speak every-day language." Then, looking about the table, he said:

"Father Clifford, let me serve you with some of this salad. Young men must not be dainty eaters.

"Allow me to refill your glass, Father Melville, with this excellent Chianti. I brought it with me from Italy. Don't be afraid of it, Father. One tee-totaler at this table is enough. Our good Father Underwood, who is so kind to us in all else, can never be induced to join us in a simple glass of wine. Father Underwood, won't you let me serve you with a little, merely this once, just to try this delicate ambrosia from old Italy? It is an opportunity you will not have every day."

"No, thank you, Monsignor. Kindly excuse me. I will take your word as to its excellence."

"Obdurate Father Underwood! The Holy Father at Rome drinks wine; we need not be more abstemious than the pope. However, each one to his taste."

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Conversation drifted into various channels till the end of the meal.

At three o'clock Mrs. Stoddard, punctual to her appointment, called on Father Underwood.

Among the poor and suffering where she had been spending the morning there was one most interesting and pitiful case: a young woman who had been ill for some time, and who was now, it seemed, in a critical condition.

"Father, can you not come to see her at once? I fear it is a case of life and death."

"Certainly," replied Father Underwood, "I will go immediately."

"Very well; let us hasten."

They met Monsignor Montrose in the hall. He greeted Mrs. Stoddard and remarked: "On some errand of mercy and charity, I suppose. The goodness of some people is unbounded. Around them everywhere live kind and generous deeds."

"You do me great honor, Monsignor Montrose," said Mrs. Stoddard.

"Not more than is merited. So Father Underwood is going with you. You will have a pleasant companion. Mrs. Stoddard, I'll not tell you the beautiful things he said of flowers to-day at luncheon, and I suspect he meant the flowers you brought him. I am delighted to find he has a poetic, I might almost say a romantic, side to his nature. Who would have expected it?"

"The orchid is certainly a very beautiful flower," responded Mrs. Stoddard.

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"I suppose you know, of course, that there are over twelve thousand species of the orchid, and many thousand varieties besides in those species," said the monsignor.

"No, I did not know there are so many, I knew the orchid has a large family, but did not realize that it has so many members," replied she; then added: "You have an inexhaustible fund of information, Monsignor Montrose. You must have been another Admirable Crichton in your youth."

Montrose quickly flashed at her a look keen as a Damascus blade. He evidently thought he detected some hidden meaning in her words, but her face was inscrutable. He felt, rather than saw, some antipathy for him.

Mrs. Stoddard and Father Underwood passed into the street and walked rapidly along. Soon the houses on their route began to look mean and shabby. Tired mothers, with neglected children, showed themselves in windows and doorways, all the surroundings bespeaking poverty. Neither Father Underwood nor his companion were strangers to this part of the city or its inhabitants.

They now entered a section quite different in character. Poverty was as gaunt here, and want as bitter as could be found in the streets they had just left, but all was cloaked under the mantle of the shabby-genteel. A generation before it had been the home of the great and fashionable, but all that had vanished, and lived only in memory. The magnificent front steps were worn and broken. The great bronze knockers were touched seldom save by the hand of

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some one who had fallen in the race of life and who was hiding failure and disappointment here.

Mrs. Stoddard and Father Underwood paused before one of these great mansions of other days, and ascended the steps. They had passed along hastily, and had hardly spoken. The panorama of life which they had seen seemed to chill their hearts, and the marks of past greatness added to the spell. They passed through the once grand entrance and entered the room which at one time had been the drawing-room.

“Wait here a few moments, Father,” said Mrs. Stoddard, “and I will prepare poor Adelina for your visit.”

Father Underwood wondered that Mrs. Stoddard had told him so little of the patient she wished him to see. The reason was that she herself knew but little of the stricken woman who had constrained herself to reticence despite poverty, illness, and possibly approaching death. She was a stranger in a strange land, without health or money, and with scarcely a friend; yet she faced the situation with unflinching determination, as if she must conquer illness and poverty, and effect some great purpose to which she had dedicated herself.

Finally Mrs. Stoddard came down the stairs and said:

“I think you would better see the sick woman now, though she appears very unwilling, seeming to have a strange antipathy to the Church and to the very name of priest. She is evidently a woman of great culture and with naturally most lovable quali-

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ties of heart. I can not understand her aversion to God's Church and His ministers."

Father Underwood ascended the stairs with Mrs. Stoddard, and entered the room of the sick woman. This room had been one of the splendid chambers of the mansion. The most of its finery was worn, and much of its grandeur had disappeared; but there were everywhere around many evidences of the refinement and artistic taste of the woman who lay on the bed ill, it may be, even unto death.

She opened her eyes when the visitors entered and fixed them on Father Underwood.

"I do not wish to see a priest," she said, "nor any clergyman. Mrs. Stoddard has been as a guardian angel to me, and at her request I will receive a visit from her friend."

The sick woman spoke English fluently, but with a soft foreign accent. A hollow cough had accompanied her words, and the hectic flush on her cheeks betokened the presence of the dread "white plague."

"I shall recover soon," she continued, after a moment. "The hemorrhage this morning, bah! that was nothing. I have had them before. I must make my way in the world. My voice is gone, but my power of painting is not, and I have always preferred painting to music, anyway. What an inspiration Italy would be to me when I go about again! But I shall never see my beloved homeland more."

"My friend, you take too dark a view of the future. You may see your homeland sooner than you think," soothingly said the priest.

"O Italia! Italia! I buried my soul and my re-

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ligion with you. For me you are in the dead past—all in the cold, dark past. Once you were as fair to me as is your own springtime, fragrant with the breath of flowers. It was my very love for you that led me to listen to that voice strong with the fire of poetry and sweet with heart-music—the voice which led me to my undoing.”

“My dear, be calm—” began Mrs. Stoddard, but the sick woman did not wait for her to finish, and continued:

“Mrs. Stoddard, you have cared for me as a sister might. I do not know why, except that you love to do good. Once I, too, loved to do good and kindly acts. Now I feel as the tigress might—” a sudden paroxysm of coughing shook the wasted form, and she lay gasping for breath. Mrs. Stoddard raised her in her arms, while Father Underwood hastened to open a window, with the hope that fresh air would revive her.

“My dear,” said Mrs. Stoddard, “you have been talking too much and have tired yourself. Do be calm, and rest. The cordial which the physician promised you will be here shortly.”

The Italian woman now turned her eyes on Father Underwood.

“It is long,” said she, “since any priest has called on me. Once”—sparks seemed to scintillate from her dark, brilliant eyes; and her chest was agitated by sharp, spasmodic movements as if the coughing was to begin again.

“Do not talk, my dear madam,” said the priest. “I fear you may do yourself injury.”

The symptoms of coughing subsided, and Mrs.

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Stoddard placed her on the pillow. The invalid lay for a few moments so still that she seemed almost breathless. Then she began to speak again:

"I suppose you may have heard of Signora Valenti?" she said, in a questioning tone.

Both Mrs. Stoddard and the priest assented.

"I am she," calmly went on the sick woman.

"What! The great Valenti!" exclaimed Mrs. Stoddard and the priest in the same breath.

"The same. My voice began to fail nearly two years ago, and I soon found that I must mend health as well as voice. I spent much money to regain both. Since my salary as opera singer was no longer forthcoming, I invested in stocks, as you people say here. Bah! Stocks! The money went to fill the pockets of thieves, not to buy my stocks. But what do I care for money! When I am about again I can earn ten times more money than I need. My grandfather was a painter hardly second to the great masters. He always said that I have his talent. One of his pictures sold in London for four thousand pounds. O, if my health only would return more quickly!"

"Signora," said Father Underwood, "I entreat you to banish all worry from your heart, and ask the Giver of all good gifts and the Searcher of hearts"—

"I have no longer a heart," she interrupted him; "and I ask gifts of no one." The woman's deep, brilliant eyes looked for a moment on the priest, searchingly, then she continued: "At times I feel I must have lived in other ages, and not in human form; but that my spirit possessed the body of some beast of prey"—

Noticing the astonished looks of her visitors, she

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interrupted herself, saying: "I am not mad. Do not fear that. When I think of my wrongs the hot blood of the South within me craves revenge."

"Do you not think that we should go away now, and call when you are rested and stronger?" asked Mrs. Stoddard.

"I am not unusually tired," rejoined the invalid. "In fact, I feel stronger now than yesterday. In a few days I shall be out and able to forget again. When I am ill I think too much. There was one who seemed to me like another Apollo Belvedere, with the soul of Michael Angelo, and the poetic heart of Dante. All Italia's art and beauty were never spoken of before—so it seemed to me—till he told me of them. But, O Abelard! O Heloise! to find the one I had thought worthy to be my king, to be a creature of foul clay, of deceit, of treachery! My blood boils and surges when I think of his Judas-like treason, so clever in the planning, so cruel in the enactment! I did not kill him. I never had the vendetta declared, for then all Europe would have known the sorrow of my father's daughter; and the world would jest because another Satan had deceived another Eve.

"Since that time I have studied men. I had no thought to work them harm, as I might have done, when they crowded around my hand as the bees do the honey-flower. My wish was to know how to preserve sacred womanhood from them. Ofttimes have I freed a loving, foolish woman from—"

"Adelina, my dear friend," interrupted Mrs. Stoddard, "I beg you not to talk any more now. You fatigue and excite yourself."

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Father Underwood arose as if to go, and stood by the bedside.

"Think as little of the past as possible," said he. "That is gone beyond our control. We have but the to-day and the to-morrow which God gives us. The to-morrows are bright or gloomy, just as we wish them to be."

The dark, piercing eyes of the Latin woman seemed to look him through and through. Finally she said:

"My friend, you have seen life, or rather have dreamed of life as it should be, whilst I have lived life as it is. Allow me to say to you that there is a vast difference between the two.

"I thank you for your call. I shall be pleased to see you again, if you wish to visit one who believes only the gospel of Voltaire."

She extended a delicate hand to the priest, who accepted her invitation and assured her that the question of religion would never be mentioned by him unless she wished it.

Father Underwood and Mrs. Stoddard left the house and walked down the street. Both were silent, both were thinking of the young woman sick almost unto death, alone in poverty; yet all this could not bend her will nor shake her determination to regain health and fortune.

CHAPTER VII.

A Warning.

FATHER UNDERWOOD accompanied Mrs. Stoddard to the street car which would carry her to some distant part of the city, whither she wished to go, and then he walked in the direction of St. Carmel's Church. He was far beyond the limits of his own parish, and he vaguely wondered, as he hastened along, which of his own parish Churches in the vicinity had charge of the motley population which was teeming in the streets everywhere around him.

"A fitting place," he thought, "for another Pentecostal sermon by Peter the apostle. No doubt but that the descendants of that variegated congregation to which he spoke so long ago are represented here to-day; and, besides, our Mongolian friends are with us in numbers."

Even as these thoughts ran through his mind he heard the rattling of tomtoms and the shrill cachination of the Chinese fife, announcing to the onlooker the funeral *cortège* of some celestial magnate. The hired mourners came first, walking four by four, and at times they would wring their hands and bow almost to the ground in paroxysms of assumed grief. Following them were closed carriages, in which rode the immediate family of the deceased magnate.

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Mounted policemen were distributed throughout the procession to suppress, if possible, the ubiquitous small boy who oft sought diversion by dodging in and out of the ranks, tripping a hired mourner when no policeman was near, or in snatching away a tomtom or a fife from the Chinese musicians who were following the carriages, and then creating an independent pandemonium of noise, much to their delight.

After the musicians there came a large number of prominent Chinese on foot, and in their midst there was an open wagon well laden with roast pigs and chickens and ducks, as well as other viands dear to the celestial palate. Two mounted policemen had reined in their prancing steeds and were marching on either side to protect the contents of the wagon from the street gamins. Some sudden commotion near the end of the procession attracted the officers' attention, and they galloped thereto to lend assistance, if necessary. Their absence was the boys' opportunity. The urchins literally swarmed over the wagon, pushed the yelling, struggling Chinese driver from the seat, and, grasping fowls or what not, were scattering in all directions to escape with their plunder before the police could return, when a stentorian voice shouted: "Stop, you young scalawags! Each one of you bring back what he has stolen."

Father Underwood had seen a very large, tall man spring from the sidewalk, and with a single bound, seemingly, he reached the wagon in the middle of the street. The athletic, quick-moving giant reached down, grasped the collar of the prostrate driver with one powerful arm, and swung him erect on his feet.

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The herculean newcomer paid no attention to the chattering, gesticulating Chinese around him, but ordered the driver to mount his wagon again, and then called the gamins to restore what they had purloined. One by one the young roughs came shame-facedly to the wagon and laid thereon a chicken, or side of roasted pork, or a box of sweetmeats, until the load seemed to reach its former proportions. The self-appointed protector watched them with a quizzical expression on his strongly-marked, kindly face. Finally he said: "Now be off, you young scamps; the police are coming, and they won't be content to speak to you as I have done, but will resort to more harsh measures, you young ragamuffins. If you work honestly and live decently it will not be necessary to steal from the heathen."

His listeners' departure was not made slower by the approach of several of the mounted police who had seen the *milité* and were pushing their horses through the jabbering crowd. One of the mounted patrolmen reined his horse by the side of the large man and, doffing his helmet, said to him:

"Well done, Father Tower! You have accomplished what the whole police force of the city could not do; that is, make those young hoodlums restore the stolen eatables. I think we should make you captain of police."

"Much obliged, Captain; but I'm content to be parish priest down here, and lend a hand to law and order when opportunity presents itself. Besides, I would be sorry to take those epaulettes from your shoulder."

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The procession had now re-formed, the mourners began their chants and semi-prostrations, and the whole *cortège* again moved along the street.

Father Underwood and Father Tower were friends of long standing. In fact, from his childhood Underwood could remember the athletic and kindly man. Tower was now closely approaching his sixtieth year, but his step was as quick and firm as it had been years before. The two priests greeted each other and engaged in conversation.

"I suppose, Underwood," said the older man, "you know why that wagon-load of catables was being driven out to the Chinese cemetery?"

Father Underwood gave a nod of assent.

"Well," continued the other, "Chin Ling Li, whose remains are there somewhere in the procession, must have an enormous appetite, or it is intended that he cross and recross the Styx, or the Chinese equivalent thereof, many times ere he is admitted to the land where China lilies are perennial. The food there which he is supposed to consume on his way to the heaven of flowers would provision a company of soldiers for a week. May the earth rest lightly on the bones of Chin Ling Li! He was a pagan, to be sure, and lived in many ways as other pagans do; yet no good cause, as far as I know, was ever presented to him to which he did not respond generously. He aided us to build our school and was a regular monthly contributor to our Church fund. Many an undertaking, both Catholic and Protestant, will be the loser by his death."

The fanfaronade of tomtom and fife could be heard now only in the distance.

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"Come along, my friend," said Father Tower genially, "come along with me, and I'll show you some new marble statues received quite lately from Italy. 'The Sistine Madonna,' life size, to say nothing of 'St. Joseph' and 'St. Patrick,' I ordered a year ago when I visited Europe, and it has taken all this time to prepare and ship them."

They walked along toward Father Tower's house, and as they went that worthy recounted the difficulties he had experienced in keeping unworthy institutions away from the vicinity of his church. He had succeeded, however.

Years before Father Tower had been a pastor in a populous country parish, in which were spoken not only English but the various Latin tongues, and several other languages besides. He had applied himself assiduously to the cultivation of the languages foreign to him, and had acquired a fluency in speaking them all, and had ministered to the different peoples in the speech wherein they were born.

As the down-town districts of San Francisco began to be filled with Slav and Latin, the archbishop wondered how their spiritual wants could be met, as these peoples pay very little heed, as a rule, to the priest who can not relate to them the old story in words that they know. So Father Matthew Tower was brought in from the green fields and rolling hills which he loved, away from the people who revered almost the ground on which he walked, and was placed over a Church which had known its greatness in the old Argonaut days, and with their passing its old congregation had disappeared as well.

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There came many undesirable people and institutions to that part of the city, but after one or two trials few representatives of vice dared a contest with the doughty pastor. Though ordinarily so gentle and kind, his eyes could flash lightnings as his tongue scathed the persistent wrong-doer, so that after several years of continued effort the section of the town included in his parish was "closed."

The two men viewed the beautiful statues which were standing for the time being in the church sacristy. Father Underwood had a very keen appreciation of all things beautiful, and his apt comments and commendations of the marble figures were very pleasing to his friend.

"See the perfect contour of the Child's arm, and how artistically the mother's dress is carved, complete even to the wrinkles in the folds," said the younger man, speaking of the "Sistine Madonna."

"I spent a month at Carrara last year, and selected the marble blocks from which these statues were carved," said Father Tower. "I then viewed the work of the artists there, and selected the man whom I thought the most proficient for my purpose. I told him just what I wanted, showed him the engravings of my saints which most nearly expressed them as they should be, or as I thought they should be, and my sculptor went to work. You see the result before you."

The two friends passed from the church sacristy to the private study of the pastor. They seated themselves in easy chairs and spoke for a few moments on the current topics of the day. Father Underwood, as

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he looked at his friend, thought he had seldom or never seen a man more symmetrically and more powerfully built. The closely-cut hair was quite gray at the temples, the face showed high intelligence and much executive power, and over all was the indescribable air of the student. Here was strength and gentleness, action and meditation, all combined.

"What are you reading, especially, now?" asked Father Underwood of his friend.

"I am devoting the most of my time to several of the Slav dialects," was the reply. "Our immigrants from Southern Europe have a strange fashion of speaking languages which, though they spring from the same roots, are nevertheless very different. A knowledge of Polish, which I already have, is very helpful to me."

"What are you studying?" asked Father Tower, in turn.

"I have been reading the Old and New Testaments after the critical method, and am studying Church history in the same way. These have been my chief studies for a decade," replied Father Underwood. "I see you do not pursue such studies," and he waved his hand in the direction of the well-filled bookcases which stood about the room. Your books show that the trend of your thought is to linguistics and literature, and not to critical exegesis or history"

Father Tower looked keenly for a moment at his companion.

"You are right," he said, finally. "I know comparatively little of higher criticism, whether it is of the Sacred Scriptures or of Church history. My books

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show the tenor of my thought, as you say, and that is along philological lines very largely. I began that way more than thirty-five years ago in the Grand Seminary in Montreal. Perhaps you do not know that Jeremiah Curtin and I were in class together. He and I possessed kindred tastes. He was never ordained, as of course you know, but left the seminary long before his time for ordination. The translation of 'Quo Vadis' and of the 'Trilogy,' of Sienkiewicz, first brought him prominently before the public. Then his philological work became better known.

"When I commenced the serious study of Scripture and theology the higher critical method was an unknown way, I believe, even to my professors; but nowadays higher criticism seems in the very air of our seminaries. I do not feel that I have the time left to follow such studies. My course is already mapped out. Furthermore," and again he glanced keenly at Father Underwood, "the trend of the Church's thought runs directly counter to the whole idea. Pope Leo's encyclical on Bible Study shows this plainly. That encyclical was aimed expressly at Maurice d'Hulst, the president of the Catholic University of Paris, and d'Hulst was regarded always as a higher critic. When in Rome last year I could detect sounds which I believe are warnings of a storm, and one day, not far distant, the Holy See will discharge a broadside which must either annihilate the advanced Catholic exegesis or drive him to the safe cover of Catholic tradition."

"Father Tower," rejoined Underwood, "I think you are too pessimistic. It seemed to me that Leo's

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encyclical on Bible Study merely suggested caution in adopting new theories and abandoning the old. Everywhere the belief is gaining ground that the Church's fundamental apologetic positions need re-statement at least, and many say that entirely new apologetic positions must be found. Take the verse of John 1:5-7, 'There are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.' For centuries this has been used as a Scriptural proof of the Trinity. Now it is known that this verse beginning with the word 'Father' is an interpolation, no part of the original text. Instances of this kind are almost numberless, and can not be gainsaid."

Tower frowned slightly. "I can not affirm nor deny," said he. "I know neither the pros nor cons. I allow my judgment to hang in suspension, so to speak, and await further evidence. When Rome speaks on such matters, the case is ended."

"If Rome speaks with the universal voice of Christian experience, then indeed is the case ended; but it seems to me that even then these decisions must be flexible, even though infallible. It also seems to me, as it does to many others, that the Catholic apologist forces us to present the Church's claims to universal spiritual sovereignty in a strained or unnatural way, and not in a manner suited to modern ideas; nor, indeed, intelligible in many instances to the clear-minded, intelligent American."

"What would you have?" queried Tower. "Has your new school abler demonstrators of Catholic truth than Thomas Aquinas, or Suarez, or that splendid Jesuit school which halted the Protestant Reformation

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and won back, by the million, ill-advised Catholics who had fallen in with the new movement? Also, what do you say to Newman in England, peerless master of English undefiled? or Brownson in America, a philosopher of unrivaled learning and power?" The older man's eyes flashed as he recited his authorities, and his voice added powerful and resonant emphasis that indicated depth of feeling and no mean oratorical ability.

Father Underwood could not refrain from smiling at the vehemence of his friend. "I can imagine," said he, "a gray-haired giant on the lecture platform, the applauding multitude, the vote of thanks, and so forth."

"Come, come!" exclaimed Tower. "Your Montrose, over at St. Carmel's, is Demosthenes enough for one city. I have no desire to contest with him for the prize in oratory. Besides, you are one of the best speakers in the diocese yourself. My little speech before the Catholic Truth Society was nothing. I presume I did repeat an idea or two just now from that lecture. But what reply do you make to my arguments?"

"Aquinas," said Underwood, "spoke to the people of his day regarding the great fundamental Christian truths in symbols and after a manner in which they thought and lived, and consequently his position was perfectly intelligible to them. The world has moved on since then, and the centuries have brought new difficulties. The old answers to former problems do not solve the questions of to-day any more than do the Thomistic notions of natural science fit into our

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theories on radium. The same must be said of Suarez's teachings. He and his fellows spoke to men of the centuries ago. Newman I like much better, but he is no Thomist. His theory of consciousness is another expression for universal Christian experience, and takes us back to Augustine of Hippo, who was a Platonist, not a follower of Aristotle, whose writings Aquinas revamped to meet the philosophical inquiries of his day. Brownson was a man of keen, strong mind, but he did not have deep knowledge of Catholic philosophy and theology. Moreover, his writings, even after the time he became a Catholic, are a tissue of contradictions. He fought loyally for the Church, I know, but even so, several times he barely escaped condemnation from Rome, so inaccurate were his writings on Catholic subjects in many instances."

The older priest seemed troubled. "I can not prove you wrong," he said, "for I have only a small acquaintance with those questions, while you are a specialist therein. One day, I am sure, Rome will speak, and all difficulties will be cleared away."

"There have been those who could not accept the definition of papal infallibility—Döllinger, for instance. He died outside the Church, in full trust of God's mercy. The sanctity of the human conscience he believed superior even to an ecumenical definition. I believe that Newman's doctrine on conscience would justify him in this. Mind, I do not say that Döllinger was right. Neither can I say he was wrong, if he was sincere."

Father Tower was silent. He believed in the Catholic Church with all his heart and soul, and could not

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accept any modern path to faith. The old way, he believed, possessed too firm a foundation ever to need any strengthening whatever. Moreover, he was anxious for his friend.

"Underwood," said he, "I can remember you in Berkeley fifteen years ago, when you gained the prize for hurdle-jumping. I never could have done it better myself." A roguish smile came over his face as he said this, for in his younger days he had been, quite possibly, the most athletic man in California.

"Now you are jumping at hurdles higher than you or I imagine, I fear," continued Tower, "and the consequences of a fall would be tremendous. The Church's reply to the Protestant Reformation was the Council of Trent, and each decision of that body ended with 'Let him be anathema.' Her reply to the results of higher criticism will be in the same strain. I do not know your critical methods, but I do know the Church and I can sense what her action will be in nearly any given instance. However, let come what may, my boy, you have a true friend in Matthew Tower."

The two men had instinctively risen and were standing hand clasped in hand.

"Montrose told me the other day that you are thinking of a vacation," said Tower. "Where are you going?"

"I assure you," replied the other, "that I have no thought of a vacation. The monsignor mentioned the subject to me, but I told him that I did not care to leave at present."

Father Tower dropped his friend's hand and contemplated him intently for a moment.

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"I never did like Montrose," he said, "nor his superior manners. He does n't ring true, some way. I wonder what motive he could have in speaking of your vacation when you do not intend to take one. It is a pity he did n't remain abroad, although the archbishop thinks otherwise. You have been the real pastor of St. Carmel for ten years, and here comes the wandering prelate home to reap the fruit of your labors.

"Last year, in Rome, I heard a number of the dignitaries speaking about him. I speak Italian, as you know, so that the Romans look on me, in a measure, as one of themselves, and give me many confidences they deny to others. They distrust Montrose entirely. Cardinal Sanchez, our former archbishop, is still living in Rome. Although ninety-two years old, his mind is as clear as ever I remember it. I think that he has given the Romans their opinion of Montrose. I agree entirely with them.

"Again I say, Underwood, you can rely on me if you need me."

Underwood thanked his friend, saying that it seemed to him that Montrose was misunderstood, and made ready to go. At the time he thought Father Tower's fears were all groundless, but later had occasion to thank the kindly and athletic scholar for many good deeds in time of need.

CHAPTER VIII.

An Irony of Fate.

It was the day for Miss van Allston's return from Los Angeles. Mrs. Stoddard went to San Jose to meet her, and she was awaiting the arrival of the north-bound train.

Soon it came steaming into the station. Mrs. Stoddard sought out Miss van Allston, who was both surprised and pleased to see her friend.

"How well you are looking, Miss van Allston! Your visit must have been a very pleasant one."

"It was, certainly," replied she. "I spent a great deal of the time at Pasadena with an old schoolmate who is spending the winter there. I had not seen her for several years, not since her marriage."

"You must have had a delightful time. I have missed you very much, and have longed for your return."

"It is pleasant to be missed," returned Miss van Allston.

"I would like to take you home with me to-night," said Mrs. Stoddard. "Will you come? I want you all to myself. I have ordered a nice little dinner to be ready for us, and to be served in my private sitting-room, just for us two. Now, do not refuse."

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"Thank you," replied Miss van Allston, "I accept your invitation with pleasure."

The short journey passed very pleasantly, and they soon arrived in San Francisco. They were driven directly to Mrs. Stoddard's home.

It was dark and raining heavily when they arrived, but the house was brightly lighted to welcome them. Dinner was served in the same room which we have seen before—the one in which Mrs. Stoddard had received Father Underwood a short time before. Now, as then, a blazing wood-fire was burning in the grate, and beautiful flowers were here and there about the room. The dinner-table was placed cozily before the fire. Everything had an air of inviting comfort.

"What a contrast this cheery room presents to the bleak night outside!" said Miss van Allston. "I am very glad that I came with you."

"So am I, more glad than you can know, Miss van Allston. I have been so lonely of late; but never mind now," she added brightly. "We must have our dinner, then we can settle down to a cozy, quiet little chat."

Mrs. Stoddard directed Miss van Allston to a seat at the table. After they were served Mrs. Stoddard dismissed the maid, and the two women were left alone.

"What could be more delightful than this?" asked Miss van Allston. "I feel almost like a little girl to-night, and that we are 'playing tea.'"

"I do not recall my childhood with any degree of pleasure. I can hardly remember ever to have 'played tea,'" replied Mrs. Stoddard.

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"I feel very sorry, indeed, for you. The memories of my childhood are very sweet and precious to me. My mother was my precious, dear, sweet mother and my most beloved companion in one," said Miss van Allston.

"You were blessed beyond price."

"A mother's love is always the same," returned Miss van Allston. "It is her hand and her heart which is ever ready. In childhood, in youth, in mature years, one always turns to one's mother, sure of ready sympathy and love. Mother-love never questions, never hesitates, never waits, but is always ready."

"I sometimes wonder if my life was made for love of any kind," returned Mrs. Stoddard.

"I am sure so. Every one comes into his own some time, and I believe that love is meant for us all," replied her companion.

"I wish I could think so."

"I am sure so."

"When I was a young girl I used to day-dream about the time when some young lover would claim me for his own," said Mrs. Stoddard; "but the sequel was, that instead of the youthful lover there came another, who was vastly different from him of my childish fancy."

"Your day will yet come, my dear friend," reassured Miss van Allston.

They had finished their meal now, and Mrs. Stoddard summoned the maid, who cleared away the table, and they were soon left alone again.

They settled themselves comfortably in large easy

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rockers in front of the fire. Turning out the gas, they sat by the light of the blazing logs, which cast a rosy, romantic glow over the room. It was a picture of cozy comfort. They sat without speaking for a few minutes.

Mrs. Stoddard broke the silence by saying:

"We were speaking of love a few minutes ago. You remarked that you believe that love is for all at some time or other."

"I certainly do."

"Miss van Allston," she began, hesitatingly, "I have given my heart into the keeping of one who knows it not—neither do I know whether he cares for me. At times I feel that he does know and does care. At other times I am equally sure that he does not. All that I do know is that I love him with my whole life, my whole heart."

"My friend, love begets love. Your heart will speak to his, and one day there will be understanding and response," replied Miss van Allston.

"But I am so lonely! My heart has spoken to his for very long, and yet there has been no response."

"Patience, my dear; all will come right. Perhaps he also has doubts and uncertainties—the same as you."

"Then why does he not speak? A man is not bound by the restrictions in these matters that a woman is."

"He may have his own reasons for not yet 'speaking,' as you say," said Miss van Allston. "Perhaps he may wish to feel more sure of your affection first."

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"You do not ask me who it is, Miss van Allston."

"No," she replied. "I feel sure that, whoever he is, he must be a good and worthy man, else you would not have bestowed on him your love, and in the light of that belief I can not think but that your heart has directed you aright and that all will be well for you."

"Miss van Allston, I have felt for days that my heart would break if I did not speak its secret into some sympathizing ear. I knew of no one but you whom I could trust. You are so calm always, so unimpassioned, so well-poised."

"Any confidence with which you may favor me I shall treat most sacredly, and I shall appreciate the trust you impose. Further, if there should be any means whereby I could render you assistance, be it ever so difficult, I would gladly do everything in my power," assured Miss van Allston.

"There are those," said Mrs. Stoddard, tentatively, "who might say that I have no right to place my affection where it is, but I know that you will say I am right."

"I can see no reason why I should say otherwise, provided, of course, that he has no ties of family; which, however, is beside the question, as you would never allow yourself to usurp the rights of another, even to the extent of a thought."

"He has no ties of family. Of that be assured," returned Mrs. Stoddard.

"Then I can see no reason why there should be objection on the part of any one, neither any reason why your love shall not progress unto the right and

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natural ending. May God bless you, my very dear friend, and bring that loved being to you in close and precious union!"

"You are so good and so true! I feel happier already," exclaimed Mrs. Stoddard, relapsing into silence, and looking meditatively into the fire.

Miss van Allston did not disturb her reverie. At last Mrs. Stoddard looked up and said:

"I will tell you—I will tell you who it is whom I love with all the pent-up intensity of one who has ever been denied love and happiness." Her face lighted up as she added, "Never had woman greater love for man than is mine for Father Donald Underwood."

"Father Underwood!" Miss van Allston exclaimed. She grasped the arms of her chair and looked intently across the fire into the face of the other woman seated there. She felt her blood turn cold. She could not speak further, and sat motionless, with all color gone from her face.

Mrs. Stoddard was too absorbed in her own reflections to observe her friend's expression. She had heard the surprised exclamation, but gave no special heed.

"Yes," she presently went on, "Father Underwood."

Neither spoke for several minutes. At last Miss van Allston broke the silence. Her voice sounded far-away and weak as she said:

"Father Underwood is a priest. Do not the obligations of his Church—your Church—preclude love and its sequence for those who enter its ministry?"

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"I suppose so—in most instances," replied Mrs. Stoddard.

"If in one instance, then surely in all," responded Miss van Allston.

"Father Underwood was never intended by nature for a priest, I feel certain," urged Mrs. Stoddard. "He is too kind, too thoughtful."

"But are not those characteristics such as would increase his aptitude for his profession, rather than to deteriorate it? Surely those qualities do credit to any condition in life."

Miss van Allston's voice trembled so that she could scarcely articulate, but it was unnoticed by her companion. At another time Mrs. Stoddard would have marveled at the phenomenon, but for the present she was concerned otherwise.

"You do not understand—you do not understand," Mrs. Stoddard said, half petulantly. "I thought you surely would have understanding and sympathy."

Miss van Allston sat very quiet. The stillness was becoming oppressive, when Mrs. Stoddard exclaimed:

"Why don't you speak! Why don't you say something!"

"What shall I say?" asked Miss van Allston, in a low voice.

Another long silence. Mrs. Stoddard at length spoke. Her mood had become more cheerful.

"We could go far away. I have heard there are other lands where a priest may marry. I know that we could be happy. It must be so. You say that love begets love, and that love will find a way."

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"You would never be happy in the committing of any wrong?" said Miss van Allston.

"Who shall say that it is a wrong? Man-made laws and obligations are not infallible."

"Not infallible, but an accepted rule of action, and as such must be abided by," argued Miss van Allston.

"If his love would be as great as mine it would overleap all barriers. Why, I would lose all the world for him, and count the world well lost," said Mrs. Stoddard.

"But does he return your love?" almost sobbed Miss van Allston.

"Just at this point is where we started when we began our conversation to-night on this subject," replied she. "If I only knew—only knew"—

The silence now was long and uninterrupted save by the crackling of a log as it fell between the andirons, shooting up a shower of brilliant sparks, and then gradually dying down till the room was quite dark, only a few embers remaining where the blazing fire so recently had sent its cheering warmth into the room.

Each woman was absorbed with her own thought.

Miss van Allston was looking backward across the years. She thought of Father Underwood, remembering him as she first knew him, a tall, slender boy, with laughing, roguish eyes—tall and slender, yet combined with which was the athletic strength which she had admired. She had admired also his refined manner, although at the same time he was so thoroughly "boy."

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A little smile came over her face as she remembered the magnificent whistles he used to make from twigs of willow. The smile broadened a little as she recalled the extra-magnificent specimen which he had brought to her one day as an offering; wonderfully carved it was, and the melodious sound proceeding from its willowy throat was something marvelous. She had kept that particular whistle for many years. It had been so like him to offer her of his best efforts—something which his own time and patience and skill had wrought out. Indeed, she was quite sure that she possessed even now that same wonderful whistle, shrunken and cracked and discolored by time, but carefully wrapped in its tissue-paper covering and equally carefully put away in that little box wherein she kept several other little mementos of those by-gone days.

She flushed half bashfully as she admitted this fact to herself.

Then the proud face became ineffably tender. She was far away, with those that she loved best. She looked with her mind's eye on the past, that past which had been so sweet and dear. There was no one to note the all but heavenly light in her eyes, for the reason that the room was too dark, and also that its other occupant was too busily engaged with her own thoughts.

As Miss van Allston had been living in the past, Mrs. Stoddard was dwelling in the future. Could one have seen, he would have read in her face eager and impatient longing, and a masterful love which would compel its object if such should be within the bounds

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of possibility. Her features were harder and more set than their wont.

Finally Mrs. Stoddard arose and rebuilt the fire. As its warm rays again lighted up the room she seated herself on an ottoman at Miss van Allston's feet. She affectionately laid her arm in Miss van Allston's lap, and looked wistfully and searchingly into her face. They two had been friends, congenial and affectionate; but a supreme test was to come. In after years they remembered and cherished this friendship, tenderly forgetting all the turbulence and heart-burnings that had intervened; but it is not given to us to reach into the future. The present must be lived. Out of its experiences come the teachings of life, and each must study his lesson for himself.

"Miss van Allston," said Mrs. Stoddard, "there is a way that you can aid me." Without awaiting reply she continued:

"Why can you not talk with Father Underwood, even to the extent of mentioning, adroitly, of course, something of my regard for him? You could ascertain, I believe—if you would—the state of his feelings regarding me."

"But would it not be rather presumptuous for one to approach him in the manner you suggest?" queried Miss van Allston.

"No, not if it would be done carefully. At times he has almost given me to understand that he cares for me. At other times his mood seems different."

"That would rather indicate a wavering mind. My knowledge of Father Underwood—"

Mrs. Stoddard did not notice the little start which

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Miss van Allston gave, neither that she had left her sentence incomplete; but, following her own line of thought, said:

"I mean, not so much that his mood seems different, but that at times I feel less certain of his regard."

Miss van Allston made no reply, and Mrs. Stoddard urged her request:

"Will you not undertake the task which I have suggested? If the positions should be reversed, I am sure that I would grant you a similar favor."

"You wish me, then, to become another John Alden," returned Miss van Allston. "Suppose Father Underwood should make a reply like to that which was made to Priscilla of old? Suppose he should say, 'Why don't you speak for yourself?' she added, somewhat facetiously, endeavoring to cover her feeling with the cloak of pleasantry.

"That would be a complicating situation," she replied, in similar lightness of tone.

Miss van Allston observed the change in Mrs. Stoddard's manner, and endeavored to hold it by continuing in the same strain, and remarked:

"I can picture you as the grand young Captain Miles Standish metamorphosed into womankind."

However, Mrs. Stoddard would not let the subject be thus turned aside.

She again said, "Will you not do as I wish? I ask it in all seriousness."

"My friend, that which you ask is the impossible. There are many reasons why I should refuse. Let me advise you to banish all thoughts of Father Under-

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wood from your mind." She put her arm affectionately about Mrs. Stoddard's neck, and looking into her eyes, she added:

"Believe me, dear friend, that is the wisest, the only course for you to pursue."

"Never! My whole life has been one of repression, always repression. Why should I not at last receive reward? I love Father Underwood. I abase myself and tell you this. I also tell you that I shall win him—if such shall lie within my power."

In a short time Miss van Allston remarked the lateness of the hour and suggested that they go to bed.

Mrs. Stoddard showed her guest into a large, comfortable bedroom, adjoining the room in which they had been sitting, while her own room also opened from the sitting-room, but from the opposite side.

After arranging little things here and there for the comfort of her guest, she kissed her good-night and left her.

CHAPTER IX.

A Foreshadowing of Events.

Mrs. STODDARD sat pondering by the fire for a long time after she left Miss van Allston. She had been in bed but a short time when she heard her guest stepping about her room, followed by what sounded like a moan. She quickly went to her and found her sitting in a chair by the open window, with her dressing gown on.

"Are you ill?" anxiously asked Mrs. Stoddard.

"Not exactly ill, but I seem to have difficulty in breathing, with a pain about my heart. I have never had anything of the sort before."

Mrs. Stoddard looked intently at her and saw that she was very pale, with a drawn, peculiar look about the mouth. She was alarmed.

"I shall send for a physician at once," she said.

"O no, I think it will pass away. I will sit quietly here by the window and this fresh air will soon give me strength."

In a moment Miss van Allston asked for a drink of water, and Mrs. Stoddard saw that her hand trembled as she held the glass, while an increased pallor spread over her face.

"I am cold," she said.

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"Come out by the fire. It is still burning very nicely."

Mrs. Stoddard assisted her to the couch, which she drew up for her near the grate. She settled her comfortably among the cushions, and as she did so felt how very cold her face and hands were. Without hesitating longer, she went to the telephone and asked a physician to come at once.

"My dear friend, is there not something I can do for you?" solicitously asked Mrs. Stoddard.

"Thank you. I think there is nothing," was the reply.

Mrs. Stoddard chafed her hands and stroked her forehead, smoothing the hair from her temples and bending over her as a mother would do over her child. She became more and more alarmed, and went again to the telephone and summoned Father Underwood.

"Come at once, Father," she said. "Miss van Allston is seriously ill here at my house."

She returned and sat beside her guest.

"The doctor will be here very soon, also Father Underwood. I thought you might like to have him come. He is very sympathetic in illness. I have seen him many times in the sick room."

The physician came almost immediately. His face showed great concern as he examined Miss van Allston's pulse and respiration. He listened carefully to the beating of her heart, then said:

"Has the patient had a shock of any kind; any sudden ill news or any fright?"

"No, Doctor," replied Mrs. Stoddard, "none whatever. She arrived this evening from Los Angeles in

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the best of health and spirits. We drove directly here, where we dined together alone. Since dinner we have been sitting here quietly."

"I can not understand it," he said. "There is no organic disorder, but an acute functional affection, which would indicate a nervous shock of some kind."

The physician further said that the symptoms were hopeful, yet the case required constant attention lest there might be a change for the worse. He gave medicine and directions, which must be followed very accurately. He then left, saying that he would return in two hours. Just as the physician went, Father Underwood was announced. He came into the room with an expression of greatest anxiety, his face nearly as pale as that of Miss van Allston. He went directly to the couch, neither looking to the right nor left. He saw only Miss van Allston. He knelt by the side of the couch and looked into her face. The pallor sent a cold chill over him.

"Constance! Constance!" he said.

Miss van Allston's eyes had been closed, but she opened them. She put her hand up to his cheek and faintly said, "Don."

For a moment she held her hand thus, then settled back into the cushions. Mrs. Stoddard stood by, a surprised witness of the still more surprising drama which had just been enacted. She clenched her hands till the nails pierced the flesh, so great was the effort to keep from crying out. Her eyes dilated. She felt her head swim. She feared that she herself would become ill. Was she dreaming? She closed her eyes for a moment. When she opened

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them it was to see the pale, anxious face of the priest still bending over Miss van Allston. No need of an interpreter to read the meaning of his look.

"I understand it all now," was her thought.

All the tortures of mediæval times seemed to be centered in that one moment of agony—agony so refined and subtle that it rent her very being.

She looked at Father Underwood, then at Miss van Allston. At last she said, in a voice which was unnatural and cold:

"Good evening, Father Underwood."

"Good evening," he replied. "Did I not speak to you as I entered?"

"No," she replied. "You had look and voice for one only. You are extremely solicitous, Father Underwood. I have seldom seen you so disturbed."

"Seldom!" he unguardedly exclaimed.

"Excuse me. I meant to say 'never.' I hope you will forget my error," Mrs. Stoddard replied, with a slight curl to her lip.

Father Underwood was brought to a remembrance of the situation by the look of cold, cruel sarcasm which he saw expressed in her face, as well as by the constrained tone of her voice.

However, Mrs. Stoddard was by nature too generous to allow any further feeling to escape her at this time, when her friend was lying there so ill. She soon recovered her poise sufficiently to treat both her guests with the hospitality and consideration that the occasion required.

Miss van Allston was too ill to notice the by-play of words and looks which had been going on. Mrs.

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Stoddard cared for the patient as tenderly as before, speaking soothing words to her and otherwise adding to her comfort.

Father Underwood could not forget that look which he had seen on Mrs. Stoddard's face. A feeling almost preternatural came over him, warning him that he would hear the echo of this night when and where he least expected it. He had not thought of Mrs. Stoddard as possessing a vindictive spirit, yet he seemed to look deep into her soul, and he read there that which made him pause. He knew that the alarm caused by Miss Allston's illness had unnerved him, and that he had allowed himself expression of feeling which would not have occurred at another time. However, he had too great a realization of the well-meaning of his own heart to allow himself to attempt any explanation. He let it pass in silence.

Father Underwood and Mrs. Stoddard occasionally made passing remarks to each other, but that was all. The physician returned as he had promised, and pronounced the patient very much improved.

"It was a very acute attack," said he, "and might have been serious, but all danger has passed and by morning she will feel very much better, and in a day or two will have recovered entirely."

The physician left, but the priest remained for a little longer. Miss van Allston had fallen asleep, while Father Underwood and Mrs. Stoddard sat in the room and exchanged a few commonplaces. Calm and smiling were they both, but there seemed to be a battle of souls going on between them, unconsciously perhaps, nevertheless active.

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Father Underwood arose to go.

“Good-night, Mrs. Stoddard,” he said.

“Good-night,” she replied, taking his extended hand. She held it a fraction longer than was her custom, while she added:

“I hope you will find time to call on me some time when not summoned here by illness, nor by the presence of some one of more interest to you than is my own most uninteresting self.”

“Thank you. I shall call gladly; but you are too modest, my dear friend. I have never found you uninteresting. On the other hand, you are always most entertaining.”

“Good-night,” he again said, and walked briskly down the path.

CHAPTER X.

The Missing Note.

FATHER TOWER'S warning in regard to Montrose had been implied in manner rather than expressed in utterance, yet warning it was, as he intended it to be. Perhaps Tower could have given no good and sufficient reason why he distrusted the monsignor. There was some powerful antagonism between the spirits of the two men. Tower was sure of his own honest life and sincerity of purpose. Unconsciously or subconsciously he felt that Montrose was his opposite in these things, and therefore untrustworthy. The two American pastors were in Rome at the same time the year before. They had met rather frequently at receptions or at places of interest to the tourist. Here especially Montrose was ready always to explain what was of historical or archæological interest to visitors from beyond the great sea. One day Montrose happened to be in the vestibule of St. John Lateran with quite a number of men and women from the United States. He was explaining to them the meaning of the great Portiuncula Indulgence, which was to be given in that Church at the customary time, the beginning of August. Tower and several friends were returning from a visit to the interior of the Church, and they met the other party in the vestibule. The monsignor knew the people in both parties, and

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at once was all courtesy and graciousness in making each one acquainted with the other.

After a few words, he addressed Father Tower:

“Father Tower, by all means have the Portiuncula Indulgence attached to your Church at home. I can not obtain that privilege for St. Carmel’s, because it is too close to the Franciscan church there, as you may know. The Franciscans have the preference in this matter and that is right, for the great privilege of this indulgence is rooted in a tradition of their order. You remember St. Francis of Assisi and his Church of the Portiuncula, of course. Your Church, however, is at least three miles from any Franciscan church.”

“How is such a favor to be gained?” queried one of the company. “I mean who grants such an indulgence?”

“It is in the hands of the Franciscans,” said Montrose. “Their Superior General would be the proper official to whom to apply.”

Father Tower was at the time living at the American College in Rome. The rector of that institution was one of the best informed men in Rome on anything touching Church affairs.

“What!” exclaimed the rector, when Father Tower told him of Montrose’s suggestion. “Go to the Superior General of the Franciscans! The Portiuncula is a prerogative of the Franciscan Churches, and the Franciscans are extremely reluctant to allow Churches other than their own to have this privilege. They are in charge of a Church in San Francisco, and are not likely to grant any other Church there the privilege to share this indulgence with them. Its

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possession explains the unusual hold of the Franciscans on the faithful everywhere. They can not afford to shorten such a leverage."

After a moment, he added:

"It is remarkable that Montrose is not acquainted with these facts. Probably, though his work here has not been along lines that would bring him such knowledge, yet he has the keenness of a ferret in matters diplomatic.

"Had you gone to Cardinal Villafranca, the Franciscan superior, you would have received a curt refusal to your request. That would not be so hard to bear, but it is unwise here in Rome to sidestep the hard and fast lines of tradition. Had you so erred, your next request to any of the Church dignitaries, be it ever so reasonable, would have been viewed with suspicion or at least caution. The news about mistakes travels fast always. So you would like to bring home from Rome some privilege of special interest to your people—but you can't get the Portiuncula."

Father Tower could not think that his fellow-diocesan wished to cause him humiliation by leading him into error through maladroit suggestion, yet it seemed very strange. However, it was the monsignor's intention to lead him astray, and for no good reason except that it was his nature to enjoy the discomfort of any one who might be a rival to him.

Father Tower had said nothing of this to Underwood. Underwood was not suspicious nor distrustful in disposition. He wished to see only the best in every one, and to deal with people as though the good side of their nature was the only one. However, it

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was difficult to deceive him in matters of grave import, whether he or others was concerned.

Underwood was soon to deal with Montrose and take issue with him in a contest which was to mean much to the future of both men. Such crises come, and the effect thereof must be met. Montrose had passed his life in intrigue, and intrigue had become his second self. "The end justifies the means," was his motto of every-day life. He could not realize the tremendous means of defense and offense which lies within the power of an honest heart and a sincere life.

Underwood was his opposite in character and purpose. So diverse were their habits of thought and action, that neither could understand the other. Principles of life so unlike do not mingle. They are as oil and water.

Father Underwood had come to St. Carmel's more than ten years before direct from the seminary, and had remained there to the present time. Montrose had been in San Francisco on one of his flying visits, when the young priest came to his Parish church. Such a visit usually meant the removal of one or more of the priest assistants to a sphere of activity elsewhere. Why, no one seemed to know. The inevitable followed on the present occasion and Underwood found himself chief assistant in the parish, though he had been ordained but a few months. When Montrose returned to his station in the far-away land Underwood became pro-rector. All admitted that he had fulfilled his duties for ten years with consummate skill and prudence.

For some reason Montrose had never seemed to

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care to molest him. Many thought that Underwood's hold on the archbishop was so strong that not even Montrose's influence could dislodge him.

The parish activities had grown under Underwood's care and direction, and the chancellor of the archdiocese declared that St. Carmel's was one of the best cared-for Churches in California. Not a few confidently predicted that Underwood would wear a miter before another ten years had passed over his head.

The flittings to and fro of his chief were almost unnoticed by the pro-rector. Underwood spent the days in his office receiving the people, aiding them in their wants and advising them, or he was out in the parish doing the work of Christ as it came before him. His evenings, after his office hours, were usually spent in his own room.

One evening he had been reading a German work, comparing the teachings of Jesus and Buddha. For some reason his mind reverted to his visit to Father Tower.

"I suppose," he thought, "the Chinese funeral procession and the connection of Father Tower with it brings him to my mind; but the Chinese are followers of Confucius, not Buddha. Some irregular association of ideas probably explains it."

His memory then reverted to the old mansion which he and Mrs. Stoddard had visited the day of his meeting Tower.

"Signora Valenti," he reflected, "is a woman of most charming manners and of a very high order of intelligence, yet how strange is the trend of her thought—Voltaire, indeed, in another edition. The

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tuberculin which Dr. Townsend is using is producing wonderful effect. That, with sleeping on the veranda, is changing her condition for the better very rapidly. She looks forward to my visits now, though but so shortly ago she was decidedly anti-clerical. How strange, too, is her antipathy for Monsignor Montrose. Yesterday I merely mentioned to her his name as one who loves art and Italy, and she seemed transformed for the moment.

Underwood's mind ran quickly over all that he knew of Montrose. He did not know him to be the author of a single unlawful act. He felt, rather than saw, that the monsignor was observing, even watching him carefully, but this did not cause him any unconcern. He had lived and worked in the open, and the prosperous state of the parish of St. Carmel was a testimony to his industry. Montrose's expressed desire that he take a long vacation had caused no thought of any ulterior design on the monsignor's part to occur to him. The expression of personal regard and trust, however, which the returned traveler had so emphasized, was somewhat surprising as he thought it over. After all, perhaps it was the Latin exuberance of spirit which Montrose had absorbed while abroad. Nevertheless, it was puzzling. Besides, what great undertakings could Montrose have in hand which might not mature for years? If anything of a financial nature, surely they should be given to some trust company, not placed in the hands of one who professed no great knowledge of financiering. If of a nature pertaining to the welfare of the Church, then certainly the archbishop or the apostolic delegate

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should be the custodian thereof. It was forced on him that there was something ulterior in Montrose's thoughts, but what he could not fathom.

The monsignor had not burdened himself with any of the parish work, except preaching on Sundays and on other days on which he gave special lectures. He wished to be free to come and go, with no parish duty to stay him. Underwood was still acting pastor, and Montrose's time was at his own disposal.

On one occasion, since his principal's return, the pro-rector had missed from the desk in his room a note which Mrs. Stoddard had sent him, concerning some poor people who needed help and encouragement. The note was of no great importance, but he wished to retain it until he could enter the names and addresses in a book which he kept in his office. As his desk had been left open he supposed that the note might have fallen to the floor, and the girl who had the upstairs work in charge, supposing it waste paper, had destroyed it.

Underwood still retained the key to Montrose's private office and study, as some of the most important parish records were kept in a small safe. On this occasion he had gone, when Montrose was absent from the city, to consult a book of receipts. He made some necessary calculations and verified them on a stray slip of paper, then tore it up and threw it into the wastepaper basket. On a fragment of paper at the bottom of the basket he noticed his own name, and almost involuntarily he picked it up. On it was the date, his name in Mrs. Stoddard's writing, and the monogram which she used on her note paper.

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Underwood sent immediately for the upstairs servant. She was not new in the house, having been employed some time before on one of Montrose's visits and on his recommendation. The young woman came at once to Underwood's office as he had requested. She entered with a somewhat timid air as though fearing a chiding for some negligence.

"Maria," said the priest, "have you taken any letter or paper from the floor around the desk in my room upstairs?"

"No, Father," she replied, "not that I remember."

For an instant Underwood thought he saw a glint like steel in the girl's eyes, but if it was there it vanished as quickly as it came and the air of the chided servant came over her again.

"One word more," he said. "Do you take care of Monsignor Montrose's study and library?"

"That is the housekeeper's work, Father. I help her sometimes, just as she asks me."

"Very well," said the priest. "Do not carry away any letter or paper from my room, even though it may have fallen on the floor. It might be of importance and much difficulty be caused by its loss. You may go now."

The girl made a timid curtsy, but again the same steely gleam showed in her eyes for an instant, as she turned to leave the room. "Somewhat fiery in temperament when aroused," Underwood had thought, "or perhaps the timidity of the frightened hare transformed into pugnacity when some unlooked-for threatening danger appears. Hardly that either.

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There is a dual nature there in that woman's heart. Nothing I had said should arouse either defiance or hatred."

His mind reverted to Montrose. He knew that Archbishop Boylston trusted Montrose implicitly. He knew also that the archbishop would not do so did he not think him worthy of high regard. There were some who thought that the archbishop was very unready to distrust any one whom he once esteemed. That was true, but no one had as yet succeeded in deceiving him for very long, and Montrose had been his close friend for twenty years and had carried out the archbishop's project at home and abroad with unfailing success.

So it all sifted down to little or nothing. Besides, why should Montrose wish to injure him in any way? He was in no wise standing in the light of that ambitious prelate, for ambitious he knew Montrose to be. What injury could Montrose do him? He feared no man, for he did his duty to God and man alike.

Then he seemed to see again the steely glint in the servant's eyes. There arose also some premonition of difficulty in the future.

"Pshaw!" he exclaimed to himself. "I am almost seeing 'spooks!'"

"Signora Valenti said to me yesterday that she believes that the highly spiritualized mind sees the future as plainly as the past, that it seems to attain some height beyond the gloom of the clouds, whence it can survey the world with incorporeal eye. For my part I would rather take good, bad, and indifferent as it comes, with no special knowledge of what is to be."

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His mind went back to the book he had laid down. He took it up again and read, "The Teaching of Gotama, the Buddha, and the Message of Jesus the Christ." He rapidly finished the chapter he had begun earlier in the evening.

"Is it not true," he thought, "that there was truth in the world before Jesus lived and taught? Undoubtedly. But, how much?" The concluding words of the chapter answered the question thus:

"In walking through the forest one sees trees of various sizes and of different foliage. All are beautiful, but not all are of equal beauty. All may be large, but still some are larger than others. Some may bear luscious fruits; some no fruits at all, or that which is indifferent to the taste. After a time, as we walk through the forest, we come to the largest tree, the most beautiful and the most fruitful tree. That tree is to the others as is the revelation of Christ to the teachings of Buddha and of many others who were close to God and near to nature's heart."

"Not orthodox," thought Underwood, "but presumably true. And why not orthodox? All truth must be orthodox."

Newman's "Lead, kindly Light," seemed to awaken echoes within as he questioned and doubted.

"So it is," he said to himself finally, "the way is dark and I am far from home; but there is a way and there is a home."

He looked at the time. It lacked one minute of midnight. The hours had fled. His thoughts had been busy and he had read less than a single chapter in the book.

CHATER XI.

The Message of the Sea.

EARLY one morning Underwood started from St. Carmel's Church to the ocean beach. The day was such that the ordinary pedestrian could promise himself little pleasure from such a walk. All night the wind had been marshaling the clouds for a storm, and the weather forecast signals, from Point Reyes north to Cape Mendocino, indicated that Jupiter Pluvius and Old Boreas would soon once more join hands and hold high revel in the hills and valleys.

Father Underwood was quite undisturbed by the atmospheric conditions. He knew that he could reach the beach before the storm burst, and then—well, there would be some convenient place of refuge near. He had discarded for the time being his clerical clothes and was clad in ordinary habiliments. In place of his roman collar, there showed the edge of a heavy black sweater. Strong, serviceable walking shoes were on his feet, and he swung a stout walking stick as he sped along.

Accompanying him was his faithful dog Rover. Rover was a large English bull-terrier, brown except his muzzle, which was quite black. The two were almost inseparable companions on the long tramps Father Underwood was wont to take.

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The man and dog went quickly through Golden Gate Park, then along the road which reaches from the Richmond district to Point Lobos.

“‘Lobos’ means ‘wolves,’ did you know, Rover? I presume they were plentiful hereabouts in early days, hence the name.”

Rover wagged his tail in complete approval of the remark, and added a few wriggles of his body for good measure.

“There are no wolves here to-day except the furious clouds, which, like wolf packs, are chasing other clouds across the horizon yonder.”

Rover growled doubtfully, yet ominously.

“Now there is the crest of the hill, and in a few moments we shall see the great Pacific Ocean at its best—and worst.”

Rover gave several sharp barks and dashed forward. Often before had he accompanied his master to that point.

When first this great Western sea spread before Balboa, it must have been in one of its gentler moods. At such times it reaches away like blue, molten crystal, quivering and shimmering in the sun.

Surely the Pacific was now untrue to its name. From Point Lobos looking north toward Marin or south toward San Mateo, as far as the eye could reach, there was one churning, raging mass of water. Fathoms high, the giant waves came foaming to the bank, one driving another as though some Titan possessed them. On they came tumbling, roaring and fighting, up and almost to the brow of the hill; then stumbling, falling back, as did the Old Guard on

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Mount Saint Jean when Wellington's Invincibles beat them down and Fate withdrew its protecting agis from Napoleon, the son of Fate.

As Underwood looked on the sublime picture, a sense of vastness seemed to come over him. The wind wrestled with him and howled around him, but he could not take his eyes from the scene before him. His soul was prostrated by the knowledge of its own weakness and littleness, and there came to his mind the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes on the occasion of a visit to Switzerland:

"After looking at the Alps, I felt that my mind had been stretched almost beyond the limits of elasticity and fitted so loosely on my old ideas that I had to spread these out to fit it."

There was a large boulder not far away, and man and dog soon sought the protection of its sheltering lee. Rover barked defiance at the waves from this point of vantage, but the roar of wind and ocean allowed no other sound to rise above it.

The whole being of the priest was stirred greatly. Faith came to him in a new meaning. No longer was it with him the bare acceptance of some creed or the declaration of the amount of certainty to be found therein, nor was it a description of some conception of the Infinite which the mind of man could form. He felt that faith is a receptive attitude of the mind towards that Power which holds the seas in the hollow of His hand, and whose breath causes the winds to blow and the waters to rage.

Faith is a leaning of the mind towards the unseen, humble, reverent, and trustful, as was the centurion,

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who said, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter my roof: say but the word and my son shall be healed."

"I have waited long for this hour of revelation," said the man. "Who could have dreamed that this day of storms and portents of storms, with lowering clouds and black horizon, would yet be a time of light?"

The dog came to his master's knees and raised his head to be petted. The master was too busy with his own thoughts, and the puzzled Rover lay down in wonderment. Never before had his advances been thus neglected or forgotten.

"Moses stood on Pisgah's heights and thence he saw the promised land. Often have I stood on some eminence in my thoughts and waited for the promised land of truth to open before me. Moses had offended God, therefore did but see the land of milk and honey, never entering therein.

"A glimpse of the promised land of faith showed clear before my soul vision this very moment. Shall I never enter into that vision land of promise, but only from afar dream a picture of its great beauty, or shall I be given to know the true life of the spirit?"

Even as he thought he seemed to know. The wind swirled around the great boulder yet more fiercely and forced the eddy of its currents against those midgets—man and dog—who sought to evade its fury by staying there. King Lear, who dared the lashings of the tempest, well might have paused ere he defied a hurricane so terrible as this. The waves battled at the base of the hill, and roared the chorus of the

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wild storm-song which the king of air was thundering overhead. The ever-faithful dog, with ears erect and eyes blazing, crouched against his master, as though ready to defend him to the last.

A great steamer from distant port was forcing her way, slowly but steadily, toward the Golden Gate. Her prow cleaved in twain the tossing waves. The shrieking wind called for vengeance on the intruder, but resistlessly the mammoth vessel drove her way toward the protecting hills of the harbor.

"Steel and wood is the vessel, and steam is her motive power: but the genius of man fashioned her and is her spirit," thought the priest. "The mind of man, thus productive and effectual, is the mirror of the Infinite. The intellect is meant to grasp and know all good, the greatest good, the highest good. But where is this good in all the boundless universe? There is that in man's heart which loves that greatest good. That power is subconscious, but real—the over-soul wherein the divine in man reposes. That divine in man is but a spark, yet like to the infinite mother-flame which is the life of God. As the rivulet follows down to the sea, so does spark seek to fly to mother-flame. As the deep sends to the clouds the water drops, that the clouds in their turn may refill the rivulet, so does God give knowledge to the heart of man. Thus the intellect learns all the good, the highest good. Thus the spirit loves the greatest good so apprehended."

It all seemed so real to him, so overwhelming. The old paths to the knowledge of the world of spirit were forgotten. When mind of God meets mind of

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man, what need is there for further proof that God exists? When the tendrils of God's heart reach down and interwine with those of the heart of man, how can we doubt the love of God for us?

Paul, the teacher, heard words in heaven he could not utter. When God in spirit and man in soul are fused as one, then is each of us another Paul, but the words we hear, why not utter them?

Within the oversoul of man a great bell is ever ringing for justice, love, hope, truth. Its sound reaches the Spirit of God, and there is echoed back eternal sanction for these virtues in the heart of man.

We search the world for the exemplar of virtues as taught by God and lived by man. All the ages, all the nations have their teachers and their prophets. One Teacher, one Prophet, stands far surpassing all the others in every quality that men revere and love. As we look we see the features and the form of the Man of Galilee.

These thoughts ran through the priest's mind in swiftest action. Before Damascus' gate the apostle had seen a light, and as it flashed around he had felt God's presence. Father Underwood, as he stood behind the jutting rock on that hill before the gate called "Golden," entrance to the world of wealth and power, had also seen a light.

Often on some dark night the lightnings dart forth from pole to pole, and all the air and earth and sky stretch before the vision like a dream picture. All clear and vivid it is, and of a beauty that moves the soul to think high thoughts and dare brave deeds.

Father Underwood felt that he had seen his Maker

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face to face that day. The darkness in his spirit fled, as if some lightning from on high had vanquished it. A vast world of truth began where he stood, and ended at the throne of God. The light gleamed from hill to valley and showed the meaning of this life as we live it here below. All anxiety was gone, all doubt forgotten. He knew now the destiny of man; he knew his own duty, he sought the way to the fulfillment thereof.

How long he stood there he did not know. The dog's cold muzzle, pressed against his hand, aroused him. The wind-storm had not abated in the least, and already some gusts of rain were hurtling through the air. The storm birds were screaming above him and circling over some object on the rocks below him. It was the vessel that had come ashore, and he had not noticed it. The waves were pounding the vessel as if the element had sworn vengeance against it and now were executing their purpose.

Two life-saving crews in their light boats were just beyond the outer rim of breakers. The seas tossed them about as feathers in the wind, yet foot by foot they drifted nearer the wreck while holding themselves firmly against the tremendous rush of waters.

For a moment the battered vessel was clear of spray and showed no living thing on deck, but from the seams gaping in her sides was water running down to meet the ocean, whence it came. No living thing was on board, as the life savers now ascertained. An abandoned vessel it was, or else every one had perished in the awful rush of sea. The life-boats

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fought their way back from the perilous rocks and turned toward the harbor.

"A picture of life," thought Underwood. "One vessel on the rocks, the other has gone safely home. It is an inspiration and a warning."

Rover now whined vigorously, and showed his master by unmistakable signs that it was time to go.

Underwood stooped down and patted the dog's head.

"What is the matter, Rover? Do you want to go home?"

Rover could not restrain his emotion another moment, but jumped up, barking furiously and putting both paws against his master.

"Why, Rover, what an impolite doggie you are! Look at those dirty paws," said Underwood in a chiding voice, as he looked down at the mud stains imprinted on his clothing.

Rover read the displeasure in his master's voice and turned away somewhat sheepishly.

"Never mind, Rover, old boy, what are a few mud stains compared with a faithful friend like you? Come on, we'll go home now and never mind the mud."

Below them, on the land side, was a station where stopped the street cars returning to San Francisco. A clangor of the bell, sounding faintly through the rush of the storm, told that it was almost time for starting. Man and dog ran with all their might down hill to the car, Rover barking and frisking in great delight.

CHAPTER XII.

A Private Interview.

"I WOULD like to have a word in private with you, Archbishop, when it is convenient."

The speaker was Monsignor Montrose. He and Archbishop Boylston were chatting for a few moments in the latter's office while awaiting the meeting of the diocesan consultors, which was to be held there to-day. There were five of these consultors besides Montrose, who had been appointed recently. "

"Certainly, my dear Monsignor," replied the archbishop. "Immediately after our meeting. I trust all our consultors will be able to come to-day. We have a weighty matter to consider and I feel that I need their advice."

These last words did not seem to please the monsignor. He would prefer that his superior consult with him alone on weighty matters.

However, the remaining five consultors were present a few moments later, when the meeting came to order in the archbishop's private office.

"I will explain to you gentlemen why I have called a special meeting of my diocesan consultors. A matter of grave interest to the good name of our Church must be considered at once. If it appears that scandal has

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been given to the faithful and to the public at large by any of our priests, then measures must be adopted to cause the abuses to cease. It goes without saying that the authors of scandal should be sought out and punished.

“To make the matter plain, I will tell you of an occurrence last night at the mayor’s annual dinner.

“Immediately across from me at the table was seated Senator Bisletti. You all know him, or at least who he is. He is, I am sorry to say, a fallen-away Catholic and a prominent Free Mason. Withal, he is a man of great ability and sterling worth, except that he has no regard for the claims of the Church. His attitude to her, however, is one of indifference, not opposition.

“Seated within reach of my voice last evening was a number of the prominent men of our city, among them being several Protestant ministers. After a while, for I was watching this opportunity, I introduced the subject of the Church. I thank you for the suggestion,” this to Montrose, “that it is well always to make the Church a subject of conversation in such gatherings; to do so, of course, diplomatically, with no violation of the proprieties.”

Then the archbishop continued:

“I had been explaining the flexibility of the constitution of the Church, stating that it is adaptable to all people and all times, and necessarily so since she is divine.

“The ministers especially, I thought, listened with unusual attention, though none of them made any reply. Perhaps good seed was sown there.

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"After some moments I noticed that Bisletti also was paying strict attention to my remarks. 'A hopeful sign,' I thought, but it was not so. In a few moments he said to me, 'Archbishop, will you allow me to interrupt you for a moment?' I assented, of course, and he said, 'You speak of the flexibility of the Church's constitution. Surely that flexibility is not such that it sanctions the divorce of religion and morals?' I replied, 'Most certainly not,' and was about to explain further, when he said, 'Then if any of your priests attend the races at Emeryville, it is without your knowledge and would be against your wish.' "

"Assuredly," broke in Montrose, "I wish I could have been at your side, archbishop, to second your repudiation—"

"Ah, my dear Monsignor," said Boylston, "I have profited by your wise counsels and have made your thoughts my own. You were present in spirit, though not in body, for I acted as I know you would have suggested."

The consultors exchanged glances with one another. Montrose noticed that Tower was looking at him quizzically. The monsignor flushed slightly and seemed embarrassed, but the archbishop was too full of his subject to note trivialities.

"We have got away from Bisletti," he said. "I told him that though there is no diocesan regulation against my priests attending horse races, yet it was most unseemly for one who had taken on himself holy ordination, when Bisletti broke in vehemently: 'Unseemly! It is monstrous! I am attorney for one of

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our large surety companies here and our agents keep close watch on those for whom we are bondsmen.

“ ‘Emeryville,’ Bisletti continued, ‘is another Monte Carlo, a school for damnation, a veritable hell. If any official for whom we are surety is found to frequent the place and to bet on the racing, I invariably advise my clients to withdraw from his bond at once, and they do so.’

“Much interest was shown in Bisletti’s remarks, and after a short pause he continued:

“ ‘Twice within two years, in my official capacity as State senator, I have tried to force an anti-race-track bill through our Legislature in Sacramento. Twice my bill has failed to receive sufficient votes to make it a law. Public sentiment seems indifferent to the existence of this crying evil in our midst. Many a home has been wrecked in our community through racetrack gambling.’

“Here Doctor Holmes, a Unitarian minister, sitting near, interposed:

“ ‘The archbishop was not aware that any of his priests attend the Emeryville races, I am sure. Is it not so, Archbishop?’

“I assented.

“ ‘I am sure,’ he went on, ‘you count on the influence of Archbishop Boylston and the great Church he represents in all questions of good order and morals.’

“O course I again assented.

“I was anxious to pursue the question further, but just then the host touched the bell and speech-making began. I was in no mood for speaking, and

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when I was called on I fear I made a poor showing. Father Tower, you were the only one of my consultants present."

"You delivered your speech with your accustomed vigor and fire, Archbishop," replied Tower, making no further comment.

"I am glad to hear you say so. I spoke to Senator Bisletti after the meeting had broken up, and asked the names of the priests who had frequented the races at Emeryville. He told me that he did not know, that the detectives ascertained the names only of those persons for whom his company was surety. He said that the fact of priests attending there came to him by outside report, yet in such a way that he could not doubt its accuracy. He had asked his agents, and they had confirmed the report that Roman Catholic clergymen had been seen at the races."

"It is monstrous!" exclaimed Montrose, springing up, apparently greatly moved. "I know," he continued, "that your Grace's careful handling of the matter at the dinner last night did much to bring honor to Holy Church. Ah," with a smile, "I can see how diplomatic and successful you managed a most difficult situation. But think of it! A priest of the Church at a gambling resort; for Emeryville is nothing more.

"I suggest, Archbishop, that you make the offense of attendance by a priest at Emeryville or any racing resort in California suspension *ipso facto*, and that this ordinance should be printed and sent to every priest in your jurisdiction."

Father Tower spoke immediately: "Archbishop,

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I do not yield to Father Montrose nor to any one in my horror for all forms of sin and shame. It is our work in this world to destroy such evil. I oppose Monsignor Montrose's suggestion, although not because of any wish to condone racetrack gambling. My reason is, that the carrying out of his suggestion would necessarily work insult to the vast majority of our brother priests here. They are the equal, intellectually and morally, of any body of diocesan clergy in the country. Very few would attend the public racetrack; fewer still, indeed undoubtedly none, would countenance racetrack gambling.

"It is quite possible that those who attended, and to whom Bisletti referred, were visitors or tourists who had heard of this Western Monte Carlo and wished to look it over.

"A regulation from the archbishop, printed and sent to each priest, would signify that each one of them might be liable to add his presence to the racetrack throng, or at least that many might do so. I must say that I think the suggestion of my brother pastor to be an unfortunate one."

Father Tower had risen toward the end of his remarks and had spoken with much feeling. When he resumed his seat, there was an audible murmur of assent.

Montrose rose to his feet at once. Opposition always nettled him. He had met with much of it in his career, but could never accustom himself to receive it with any degree of equanimity. On this occasion the strong personality and rugged sincerity of Tower added to his annoyance. He felt, moreover,

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that he had the worst of the argument thus far. The murmur of assent, when Tower had finished speaking, told him that the other consultors felt the same as Tower. Montrose's oldtime suavity was gone now as he said:

"My colleague charges the delinquencies on some possible priest tourists. Why does this occur to his mind? Are priest tourists prone to violate the laws of ordinary decorum? Has it been his experience that traveling tends to moral deterioration? Of course, I mean no reference to Father Tower himself. He is tried and true."

An intangible something in Montrose's intonation implied an insult which his lips did not care to utter. Archbishop Boylston did not detect it, neither did any of the other consultors except Tower himself, who now arose to his full height, with face pale and eyes flashing with indignation.

He began in a low voice: "My travels have not predisposed me for nor against any one. As a traveler I am an onlooker only; but here I am at home, and have been for a full generation and more. I think I know my brother priests of this diocese, and I feel that I can vouch for them should such a necessity arise.

"Abroad I have heard rumors of the evil-hidden life of some men who should live near God, but who do not. There are tales that in Paris, at the Moulin Rouge and the Bal Bullier, pagan rites have been participated in by those—"

Here Montrose sprang to his feet and faced the older man with something almost like dismay.

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"These stories—" he began, when Doctor Rheinfeldt, a German consultant, interrupted him with: "I think you gentlemen are a little out."

Rheinfeldt was a priest who had come to California from Germany after the enacting of the Falk laws. He was believed to be deeply versed in Thomistic philosophy.

"I ask—" began Montrose again, when the archbishop interposed:

"I think Father Rheinfeldt is right. We have lost sight of the original question."

The archbishop was of the opinion, as were the listening consultants, that they had heard some spirited debating between two of the cleverest and clearest-minded men in the city. They did not detect a sinister note anywhere.

It had been a revelation to Tower. He had meant nothing personal to Montrose when he mentioned the notorious places in Paris. His purpose was to strengthen his contention that the offending priests at Emeryville were strangers who had come, perhaps, out of curiosity; or possibly were fallen and deposed men. Montrose's perturbation would seem to indicate that he had been hit hard.

"I find myself in the same quandary as before. You are in favor of suspension *ipso facto*, are you not, monsignor?" asked the archbishop.

"That is my opinion," returned Montrose.

"You are not in favor of such a measure, Father Tower?"

"Most decidedly no, Archbishop," replied Tower.

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"Such a regulation promulgated would be an unmerited imputation to a splendid and self-sacrificing body of men."

Doctor Rheinfeldt agreed with Tower. Father Herrera could not quite make up his mind. The remaining consultors, one of whom was the vicar-general, declined to express an opinion.

"Father Tower," said the archbishop, "what positive action would you recommend taking in the matter?"

"Find out the offenders, if possible, and if they are members of this diocese, punish them as they deserve," was the reply. "Such men should be deposed from the priesthood."

"I am inclined to adopt your suggestion," replied Boylston. "It seems to me that the other action would be untimely now. Let us repeat the '*Sub tuum Presidium*.'"

On their knees, archbishop and priests recited the prayer for the protection of the Virgin Mary. Then one by one the priests left the room, first approaching a small receptacle on the wall, in which was a sponge soaked with blessed water. Each placed his finger on the wet sponge and then reverently made the sign of the cross over forehead and breast.

Finally, the archbishop and Montrose were alone.

"Your suggestion was an excellent one, but too drastic at the present time, Monsignor," said Archbishop Boylston, after a moment's pause. "It is better to wait for further light when one is undecided."

"Quite so, your Grace," replied Montrose.

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"I may not be able always to accept your opinion, but I am pleased always to hear your mind," continued the archbishop.

"Your Grace's slightest wish is law to me," said Montrose. "Still it seems to me that Senator Bisletti would not have spoken so pointedly last night, and in public, too, did he not have strong grounding for his remarks. He is a very capable man and can help us very much, if he will, with the amendment to the state constitution exempting churches and Church schools from taxation. He doubtless has more knowledge of the racetrack evil in the aspect of which he spoke than he cared to tell you."

"That is true—is true," said Boylston, half to himself. "I begin to see the matter in the same light that you do. An ordinance making racetrack attendance by priests suspension *ipso facto* may be quite necessary. I shall consider the matter carefully, for I must be prudent."

When Montrose came to the archepiscopal residence that day he had intended to sow adroitly the seeds of distrust in the archbishop's heart regarding Underwood. As Montrose saw each day increased evidence of Father Underwood's popularity, not only in St. Carmel's parish, but in the entire city, the undoing of the pro-rector was becoming almost a mania with him.

In the beginning, Montrose had not been determined so seriously to work injury to the young man. When first he found that Underwood was in his way, as he thought, he had contemplated to bring this to pass. The removal of Underwood was only one of his

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plans now. These plans had been conceived in malice, and as to the way of their fulfillment, well—"Let the end justify the means," was Montrose's thought.

He felt he must "work very diplomatically," as his favorite phrase had it. He could not afford to do aught which would lead the archbishop to distrust him.

In the consultors' meeting he had been obliged to witness the rejection of his own suggestion and the acceptance, practically, by the archbishop of a contrary suggestion from Father Tower. Montrose had noted how strongly the words of that resolute priest had influenced the archbishop; indeed, much more strongly than his own words had done.

"I may not be able to influence Boylston to believe ill of Underwood," thought he. "Perhaps it would be wise to wait." Quick as thought his mind was made up. He would invent some reason for the interview for which he had asked with the archbishop, and leave Underwood out of the discussion. However, when he was alone with the archbishop he saw how easily he had turned him from Tower's view of the question which had been under discussion at the consultors' meeting a few moments before. Hence, instantly he was ready once again to take up his original intention to instill distrust of Underwood into the archbishop's mind.

As soon as Archbishop Boylston had finished speaking about the diocesan regulation in regard to horse-racing, Montrose began:

"Your Grace, I requested the favor of a private interview with you to-day. It is in regard to a mat-

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ter over which I have thought and prayed much. There are tears in my heart as I speak to you now."

The archbishop looked grave. He was no lover of unwelcome news.

"What is it, Monsignor?" he asked.

"My one passion," Montrose went on, "is for the glory of Holy Mother Church. I live only to advance her kingdom, and I would die in that same glorious cause."

"Yes, yes," said the archbishop, with the slightest trace of impatience in his voice.

Montrose now came directly to his point.

"It regards Father Underwood," he said. "Wild horses could not have drawn me here to say aught against him, was it not for the Church's good as well as his own. I love him as my own brother."

"Father Underwood!" exclaimed the archbishop, in a startled tone. "What can any one say against him? I regard him as one of the safest priests in my diocese."

"So did I till recently," replied the other. "Alas! it is not so."

"Proceed with what you have to say." The archbishop's voice was calm but forced.

"It is this." The words seemed to choke Montrose as he uttered them. "There is a woman living in my parish who is young and handsome, has intelligence and refinement, position and wealth. Her husband, it is said, is dead. I have reason to believe that she and Underwood are friendly beyond the bounds of propriety."

"Good heaven!" exclaimed the archbishop. "What reason have you to believe this to be true?"

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"Simply this," replied Montrose, his reluctance to speak clearly showing in his voice. "This woman, whose name is Mrs. Stoddard, calls on Father Underwood quite frequently and remains in his office longer than most callers do. This, of course, attracts attention.

"Furthermore, they have been seen to take long walks together into parts of the city little frequented by people such as they. This again causes comment.

"I have read several notes from this woman to Underwood. While the ordinary observer, perhaps, would see nothing unusual in these notes, I have been able to detect in them signs of some secret understanding, of which I can not divine the nature. This understanding is very subtle, and never would I have suspected it did I not know more of what I shall call the indiscretions of these two. Mind, I do not say guilt. It is when the two are talking together in public places, as they sometimes do, that one may see the indefinable something displayed which marks the existence of relations which are hidden beneath the surface."

Here Montrose burst into tears, so grief-stricken did he seem over the subject matter of his recital.

The archbishop also was greatly moved at the supposed revelation of Father Underwood's unseemly conduct. He was also puzzled. He had a vague feeling that different parts of the case which Montrose had made out did not seem to fit well together.

"Have you the notes which this woman sent to Father Underwood?" he asked.

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"No," returned Montrose, in a choked voice. "Unless one knew the case somewhat, the notes would seem trivial. Therefore I destroyed them."

"Do you not think that I should send for Underwood and reason with him in regard to his unbecoming deportment?" asked the archbishop.

"By no means," quickly replied Montrose. "If he is guilty, it would make him the better able to cloak his guilt. If he is indiscreet only, your speaking to him would lead him to defend stubbornly the propriety of his conduct. Of late I have had examples of his spirit of stubbornness which have greatly surprised me."

"What do you advise?" asked Boylston.

"Leave the matter entirely in my hands. I am on the ground, am well acquainted with the facts of the case, and will do what is the best for the Church, also for Underwood."

"Perhaps that is best," said the dignitary, sadly; for he was much moved over what Montrose had told him. "I leave it with you, at least for the present."

The monsignor arose to go. He reverently kissed the ring on the archbishop's hand, the ring being symbolic of the archbishop's episcopal authority.

Montrose started for the door. The archbishop sat with closed eyes and with head bowed. As Montrose opened the door he said:

"Monsignor, will you request my secretary to come here? I wish him to draft a regulation forbidding the attendance of any priest at the race-course, under penalty of suspension *ipso facto*."

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“With pleasure, your Grace,” said Montrose.

As Montrose left the room he stood for a moment in the door, looking at the archbishop, who still sat with bowed head and closed eyes. A gleam showed in his eyes, then vanished. He closed the door, gave the archbishop's order to the secretary, and left the house.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Monsignor's Success.

MONSIGNOR MONTROSE was sitting in his private study on the evening following his interview with Archbishop Boylston. Affairs had gone quite well with him that day. To gain his own way over others meant much to the monsignor. It mattered little what means he used in obtaining what he sought.

At the present time the archbishop distrusted Underwood, but sooner or later his Grace would make inquiries of some one else as to Underwood's conduct, or perhaps he would question Underwood personally. The monsignor quite feared this.

"Boylston accepts my view of Underwood's guilt, or my supposed view of his guilt, and I must move heaven and earth to demonstrate the correctness of that view beyond question. How can I do so?"

The monsignor was too wary a practitioner to proceed with his plans until they were fully matured. He knew, also, that there would be danger in delay.

"I must act at once, but unerringly," commented the monsignor to himself.

That he had not a bit of proof for anything he had said to the archbishop concerning Underwood, he knew, but that did not matter to him.

Montrose's thoughts reverted to Mrs. Stoddard.

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He was a keen reader of the secrets of the human heart, and he felt that Mrs. Stoddard held Underwood in great esteem, possibly affection. How Underwood felt concerning her he did not know, nor care. The standard by which he himself lived was the measure of his judgments for others.

"I would better see Mrs. Stoddard," was his thought.

He took up the telephone book and found Mrs. Stoddard's number. In a moment he was in communication with her.

"I am quite anxious," said he, "to talk over some parish charities with you, Mrs. Stoddard. When may I call?"

"I am about leaving here to bring reports to Father Underwood of some persons in whom he is interested. I will call on you after I see him, if agreeable to you."

The monsignor caught an intonation in the voice that did not seem to please him.

"Doesn't like me, I suppose. All for Underwood," he thought; but aloud he said: "Capital idea, indeed. I shall be delighted to see you again in my study. I cherish the remembrance of your former visit. I shall be here all evening. Kindly tell the servant to ring my bell when you are ready to see me."

"Very well, Monsignor Montrose," came the reply.

He hung up the receiver, and was sitting at the table in deep thought when there came a tap at the door. The maid of the upstairs work entered in re-

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sponse to the monsignor's "Come in." It was evident that there was some understanding between the two, for she dropped her hesitating, uncertain manner as soon as she came into the room, and went confidently to the monsignor's chair. Drawing from her pocket several papers and letters, she placed them in her superior's hand. Stepping back, she waited expectantly.

"Very well done, my child," said Montrose. "You have been busy in the interest of Mother Church. God will bless you for it."

He looked quickly over the papers which she had brought him.

"Nothing of value to us thus far. Put these back in the drawer whence you took them. In the same order, mind, as you found them. Ah, what have we here!" This to himself. "A note from Miss van Allston to Underwood. She addresses him as 'Dear Donald,' and signs herself 'Constance!' Well, by Jove! who would have thought—nothing in the note, though, of consequence. Some charity work or other they're interested in. Perhaps they have a secret code. But no; they are free to meet and talk when they please. Most extraordinary—that beginning and end. Just what I need, anyway, for the interview with my lady Stoddard."

The servant had stood watching him while he read. She was in his employ and to some extent was his accomplice in endeavoring to fasten some wrong-doing, or the appearance of it, on Underwood. Montrose had led the woman to believe that she was doing a service to the Church by searching among

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the papers in Underwood's private room for something that could be used to compromise him. It was serving the Church, the ignorant woman had been made to believe, though she had not stopped to reckon how nor why.

Accordingly, under direction, she had taken wax impressions of the locks in Father Underwood's desk which stood in his room. The monsignor had keys made from the impressions, and when she was ostensibly engaged in putting the room in order she regularly opened each private drawer and looked carefully through the contents. Her quick ears soon caught the sound of approaching footsteps, and if any one came near they saw only the menial engaged in her daily tasks, while every drawer was securely locked. When alone again the look of the menial disappeared, and she opened each drawer with deftness and dispatch, taking to Montrose anything she thought could be of use to him.

Thus far she had escaped detection, but until to-day had found nothing that the monsignor considered of value. Some of the papers had been of such little importance that he had torn them up and had thrown them into the waste-basket. Since Underwood had questioned the girl in regard to some fragments which he had seen thus disposed of, everything had been replaced exactly as she found it.

"Take back the other papers as soon as you have opportunity. I'll retain this one," he said, holding in his hand Miss van Allston's letter, but giving the remaining papers to the servant.

"Remember, now," he continued, "you need not

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mention what you are doing for me to any one, not even in the confessional. Confession is for sinful acts, and your searching among Father Underwood's papers is not sinful, but meritorious. I think that you would better come to me for confession, for the present. I have many indulgences, especially allowed to me by the Holy Father, which no other priest in the archdiocese can give. I want you to have the benefit of them all, because you are doing a work that is beneficial to our mother, the Church."

The woman returned the papers to her pocket, and curtsied quite humbly. She was again the menial in the presence of her employer. The monsignor paid no further attention to her, but became occupied with his thoughts. She left the room and closed the door. The spring lock sprang into its place with a metallic snap.

The man in the room was not pleasant to look on. Malice and wounded pride showed themselves on his mobile features. Some men are like the Athenian who voted for the banishment of Aristides because many called him "The Just." Montrose had been compelled to listen to encomiums of Underwood from the parishioners of St. Carmel until his soul was ready to rise in rebellion. In the beginning he had not been very seriously disposed to work very grave harm to Underwood. True, he had wished to have him "removed" to some mountain district; but it was when the archbishop refused to consider such a step that Montrose conceived the desire to ruin him, if possible.

Montrose had wished to be a power in the politics

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of San Francisco. On returning to that city he had found the political conditions such that he could not join with the dominant party, owing to its corrupt methods and aims. The minority lacked coherency, and, besides, was in the hands of men of long residence in the city and little disposed to give the direction of the reform movement into the hands of a stranger. Several of the reform leaders, however, were intimate friends of Father Underwood and came frequently to consult with him, much to Montrose's secret displeasure.

Perhaps the strongest element in Montrose's hatred for Underwood was jealousy. That, indeed, seemed to be the keynote to the situation. Even the affection which he could see that Mrs. Stoddard entertained for Underwood still further exasperated him. He himself cared nothing for her, but it was enough that she disliked him, as he felt she did, and that she had high regard for the pro-rector.

About an hour after the servant had left Montrose's study a bell was rung in the hall, which made it known to him that some one was waiting for him. He unlatched his door and came forth, all smiles, to greet Mrs. Stoddard, who was standing in the hall.

"You wish to see me, Monsignor Montrose?" she asked, quite coldly.

The monsignor pointed to the open door of his private study.

"Pray precede me, my dear lady. It is seldom that my study is graced by your presence. Do be seated, please," said he, as he closed the door. The spring lock again closed with a snap.

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"I believe you wish to speak with me," Mrs. Stoddard said, as she seated herself. There was no warmth nor cordiality in her manner.

"Indeed I do, Mrs. Stoddard," replied Montrose. "But may we not pass a few minutes in conversation before settling down to cold, hard facts? I am sure"—

"Yes," said his companion, "but it is getting late, and I have several things to which to attend at home before the evening closes."

"Busy Mrs. Stoddard!" said Montrose. "You found Father Underwood, of course, his usual good and interesting self?"

"I really have not time to discuss that with you," replied the lady, somewhat tartly.

"Your friend, Miss van Allston, has been ill, I hear. I trust that she is much better. She, too, is a great friend of Father Underwood, is she not?"

Mrs. Stoddard turned pale, then red. Wittingly or not Montrose had touched a chord the vibration of which did not bode well for Father Underwood. The monsignor saw his vantage ground and occupied it at once. He continued:

"Ah! I see you understand somewhat the interest which Father Underwood takes in your friend, Miss van Allston. In their letters they call each other 'Dear Donald' or 'Constance,' do they not? Quite brotherly and sisterly, I'm sure."

Mrs. Stoddard sprang to her feet and glided to the side of her tormentor. Her eyes flashed fire as she said:

"Monsignor Montrose, you lie!"

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It was Montrose's hour of triumph, and he knew it.

"My dear Mrs. Stoddard," said he, after a moment. "Do sit down, I pray you."

His calm tone brought her to herself. She returned to the chair and sat down.

"Father Underwood is entirely confidential with me. What I have said or intimated to you I know to be true."

As the monsignor concluded his words the woman again was seized with a paroxysm of anger. She arose from her chair and exclaimed:

"How dare you say such a thing to me! You are a devil, a mocking devil! I hate you!"

She resumed her seat: a storm of sobbing shook her frame; then she began weeping as though she had been a broken-hearted child. Montrose had been holding in his hand the note from Miss van Allston to Underwood. Only as a last resort did he intend to show it to Mrs. Stoddard. Thus far in the interview he had taken no stand adverse to the pro-rector. He now saw the way to gain his purpose by becoming his apparent adherent.

"Mrs. Stoddard," he began, "you do me great wrong. I can not understand your unusual agitation. I love my colleague, Father Underwood, as my own brother, and would trust"—

"I can trust—trust nobody," said Mrs. Stoddard, looking through her tears at the monsignor. She was for the time being quite broken in spirit.

"But of course you trust Father Underwood, as I do?" he interrogated.

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"I saw—heard—him say 'Constance'—and 'Donald'—the night she was so ill at my house," said she, brokenly.

Triumph flashed in the steel-gray eyes of Montrose. He placed the note, which he was still holding in his hands, under a book. His way was clear.

"Remember you are speaking to me as priest—as your confessor."

"Yes, he said 'Constance,' she—they said 'Constance' and 'Donald'—yes, as a priest." She spoke as one in a dream.

Montrose had assumed the manner of father confessor.

"I shall write down what you have told me, and you must sign it in presence of a witness. The witness, of course, will not know the contents of the writing. Remember, you are now in the confessional, and what you say or write I can never divulge, nor speak of even to you, except you first mention it to me in the confessional."

Montrose had been writing rapidly even while speaking. In a very short time the statement was ready. He placed it before her, and she took the pen from his hand and signed it mechanically, hardly looking at the written words under her signature.

"Of course, you are willing that I should confer with my own confessor, or superior, on this matter, should I deem it necessary?"

The woman did not seem to hear what he said. Her eyes were still staring, wide open, before her, and she repeated, "He said 'Constance'—she said"—

"My child, I understand you," said Montrose.

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He had touched, a moment before, an electric button. A peculiar double tap now sounded on the door. He unlatched the door, and the upstairs servant-girl entered.

"Maria," said he, "Mrs. Stoddard wishes you to sign your name as witness to this paper. Is it not so, Mrs. Stoddard?"

"Yes," she said, faintly. "It is true, then—all true. How pale and anxious he looked that night when he saw her so ill. Then he said, 'Constance!'—she said, 'Donald!' O, the agony"—

She was looking into emptiness, as before, with wide-open, staring eyes. Montrose covered the paper with a blotter, except the lower edge where the servant wrote her name as witness, immediately under the signature of Mrs. Stoddard.

"Very well, Maria, you may go," he said.

She went out, and the bolt shot into place, as usual. The sound aroused Mrs. Stoddard. She looked around, questioningly, as does one on awaking from sound sleep. After a moment her eyes rested on Montrose.

"You wished to speak with me this evening, I believe," she said, wearily.

"O, it is too late now, and you are very tired. Some other time will do," was the reply.

He took the telephone receiver from the hook and called for a number. It was the number of an all-night carriage station. A vehicle was dispatched to St. Carmel's parish house.

"I am not feeling well," said Mrs. Stoddard, faintly.

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Montrose opened a drawer in his desk and took therefrom a bottle of strong French brandy. He poured some of the liquor into a tiny glass and hastened with it to Mrs. Stoddard's side. She barely tasted the burning cognac, but seemed somewhat revived.

Almost immediately a carriage stopped at the door. As the rumble of its wheels ceased, Montrose took Mrs. Stoddard's arm, saying, "Your conveyance is ready."

She went with him at once. They passed through the hall and down the front steps together. He assisted her into the carriage, with his usual courtesy.

"Remember, I am delighted, always, to be of service to you." were his words, as the carriage drove away.

CHAPTER XIV.

Adelina Valenti.

MONSIGNOR MONTROSE turned from the street and slowly walked up the spacious front steps of St. Carmel's parish house. On reaching the top landing he paused, and watched the slow-moving carriage which was carrying Mrs. Stoddard to her home. After a moment it left that street and was lost to view. The sky was clear, and for California the weather was quite cold. The stars were twinkling sharply.

Montrose stood on the landing, with hands crossed behind him. Dressed in his monsignor's cassock, purple in color, silken in material, he made an imposing figure as the light from the electric bulb over the landing enveloped him. His mind was made up as to his future course of procedure.

He knew that the archbishop was to take the afternoon train for Menlo Park and would return on the late evening train. This was due at the Third-and Townsend-Street Station at ten-forty in the evening. It yet lacked a full hour of that time. He intended to call on the archbishop when he arrived at his home, which could not be before eleven o'clock at least.

He would lay the whole case before him. Finally he would show the statement signed by Mrs. Stod-

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dard and witnessed by the servant. He would permit him to read the statement, but he would plead that his limitations as Mrs. Stoddard's confessor would prevent his allowing the archbishop to retain it.

The church, a magnificent structure, Gothic in architecture, faced on a main street near two converging lines of street cars. The parish house was immediately back of the church and facing on a side street. This was one of the choice residence districts of the city.

An electric car stopped on the street corner near the church, and Father Underwood alighted. The bell clanged noisily, and the car sped on. Underwood came quickly along the wide cement sidewalk and began to mount the steps leading to the front door.

"Good evening, my dear Father," said Montrose. "I am standing out here counting the stars, while you have been on works of love and mercy. You are working day and night. The night watchman tells me that the light in your room is burning to the wee small hours. Let me advise you in this. Do not study so late at night, and let some of the other priests take a larger share of the parish visiting off your hands. I really think you should allow me to ask the archbishop to grant you a long vacation. Depleted nerves, my friend, you might find difficult to mend."

"I am feeling very well indeed, Monsignor. My night studies are still necessary, though the light now is before me."

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"Light, light," thought the monsignor. "What can he mean by that?"

Then, aloud, "I presume, noting the direction from which you came, that you were visiting our friend George Preston, who was taken so ill this morning."

"You are right," said Underwood. "That is, I visited his wife and children, for he had passed away just before I arrived."

"Too bad! too bad!" said the monsignor, with great apparent sympathy. "To-morrow I shall call on the family and extend to them my condolences."

George Preston was one of the pillars of St. Carmel's Church, a wealthy ship owner, and a devoted friend of Father Underwood. Montrose, soon after his return to San Francisco, had endeavored to gain the good-will of Preston, who was very influential in the reform politics of the city, but Preston had not cared to avail himself of the monsignor's advice nor help. Perhaps he saw the weakness in the monsignor's armor, for in his presence he often praised the good qualities of Father Underwood to the very limit of politeness. Montrose never forgave such an affront, as he considered it. Now Preston had died, and that seemed to him almost like another triumph in his day of victories.

"Too bad! too bad!" said Montrose again. Then, a moment later, he added: "I do not seem to feel like going into the house now. The air is very crisp and bracing."

He seated himself on the low balustrade on one side of the landing. Perhaps Underwood also found

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the air crisp and bracing, for he seated himself on the other balustrade.

"What else of interest has happened in the parish to-day?" asked Montrose. "I regret greatly that my time does not permit me to participate more actively in the Church affairs here; but nothing is overlooked while you are in charge, I know."

Underwood passed the intended compliment without notice. The monsignor's plethora of commendation was becoming tiresome somewhat.

"There is the case of a young woman which is of great interest," replied Father Underwood. "She is not a resident of this parish, however. This forenoon a large automobile stopped in front of the house. The chauffeur came up the steps and told the servant that there was a lady in the automobile who would like to speak with me. I went down and found a lady there who a few months ago seemed at the point of death of tuberculosis. The use of tuberculin, together with living almost entirely in the open air, worked the change."

"Very wonderful, indeed! Medical science is making very rapid strides," said Montrose.

"The betterment in her health is certainly wonderful; but there has been another strange turn of fate in her favor. Some time ago, under the direction of brokers here, she invested a large sum of money in mining stocks. Later they reported the mines as worthless and the money, consequently, lost. I managed to interest some of my friends who are prominent in legal and political circles, and they investigated the supposed deal of the brokers. It was

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found that these men had appropriated the money, and that they had given mining stocks altogether different from what they had contracted to transfer. It was a swindle, pure and simple, which they had supposed they might work with safety on a woman, and a foreigner as she is. They disgorged the money hastily when the right parties interviewed them."

"Splendid! Splendid!" said Montrose. "So this foreign lady bought an automobile with part of her restored wealth, and came in triumph to thank you in person."

"Hardly that," said Underwood, with a smile. "She had already thanked me for my small part in having justice done her. For the sake of her health she, with some friends, was on the way, in her automobile, to San Jose, or farther if the rains hold off."

"It is certainly delightful weather. I should not object to taking an automobile trip myself," said Montrose.

"Her special reason for seeing me this morning was to tell me about some stock which she had in the Western Pacific Railroad. I had not known of this till this morning."

"That was a good investment. Since the Harri-man interests have taken over the Western Pacific its stock has been advancing by leaps and bounds. Good stock that!" remarked Montrose, shrewdly, which showed that the monsignor kept in touch with things financial as well as political, diplomatic, and ecclesiastical.

"The lady had purchased a large block of this stock," continued Underwood. "At first it depre-

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ciated, but still had some value. She hypothecated it and was living, scantily enough, on the proceeds when I met her first. The advance in the value of the stock has given her nearly another fortune."

"Fortunate foreign lady!" commented Montrose. "I suppose she is willing now to forget the unpleasant past, dishonest brokers and all, and live in health and peace and comfort ever after, as the story books tell."

"She is not willing to forget the dishonest brokers, at any rate," said Underwood. "She told me that she has had them arrested, and, if necessary, would spend every dollar she possesses to have them punished. She is a graft prosecutor with a vengeance. She has employed the most expert criminal counsel in San Francisco to press the case against the offenders. Prominent men they are, too—Weston and Simpson and Wyman. You know who they are, of course. She is a most undesirable person to have as an enemy."

"She is not of this parish, you say?" asked Montrose.

"No," replied Underwood. "She was living down near the water-front in a lodging-house when, through Mrs. Stoddard, I first met her. She is now living at the St. Francis."

"This lady is a member of our Church, of course?" again questioned Montrose.

"No," replied Underwood. "Although brought up a Catholic, so I understand, she is an adherent of no religion now. She seems to hate all religion and ministers of religion."

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"Very sad! Very sad! You say she is a foreigner?" queried the monsignor.

"Yes. She is Italian. She is well educated, a lover of art and of all things beautiful. It is too bad she has such hatred for things pertaining to the Church. Only just the other day I chanced to mention you by name, and she became very much perturbed, requesting me not to mention your name again. Her antipathy, of course, arose from the fact that you are a clergyman."

Montrose started when he heard that the mention of his name had so aroused the Italian lady.

"What is her name?" he asked.

"You know her, doubtless, by reputation," replied Underwood. "She was an opera singer until recently, and of great ability. Her name is Adelina Valenti."

Montrose stood upright, then sat down again on the balustrade. He seemed greatly agitated.

"I do not know that I remember the name," he said, finally. "It seems somewhat familiar, but I suppose that is because it is Italian." After a very short pause he said: "Let us go into the house. I am feeling quite chilled. The weather must have turned colder."

Underwood wondered at the perturbation of the monsignor. He understood its full significance later.

A moment later Montrose found himself in his private study once more. As he closed the door the resounding snap of the catch partially brought him to his senses. He turned on the electric light and sat in the same chair which Mrs. Stoddard had occu-

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pied so recently. He tried to think, but seemed dazed, as his victim there had been a short hour before. The jaunty air had left him. He looked old. His face seemed gray and sunken. The silken prelat-ical robes hung loosely around his body.

Adelina Valenti was there, in the same city with him! Possibly she knew him, Montrose, to be her recreant lover.

Their story began a number of years before, when the monsignor had laid aside his clerical garb for the time and was living in Naples, purporting himself to be an English gentleman of means who was interested in art and music. Garments of the latest London cut adorned his shapely proportions, and a becoming dark beard covered his face. No one would have recognized in him the pious ecclesiastic who officiated so gracefully at the various Roman functions, nor the priestly representative of a powerful American archbishop. It had been long his habit to absent himself thus from Rome for months at a time. Once in London he was an Italian gentleman, but who was in part of English extraction. Again in Paris he had been a native of Quebec, but partly of American extraction. In every case he arranged his beard and his clothing to suit the character he assumed.

While in Naples, Montrose made the acquaintance of a celebrated painter named Andrea Valenti. In the artist's family was living a niece, Adelina, his brother's only child and an orphan. The best and proudest blood of Sicily ran in the veins of the family Valenti. The girl was in her teens when Montrose, or George Esmond, as he called himself,

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first knew her. She was studying music and painting in Naples, and had a future of brilliant promise in both. The supposed George Esmond and she had many tastes in common. For the first time in his life Montrose felt true affection, and he inspired in Adelina deep regard for him, which increased with the passing of time; but, unlike her, he was fickle. As the year waned, so did his love, and he began to devise ways and means to gracefully but completely retire from her world.

Montrose occasionally made visits to London—so he said; in reality he went to Rome and other ecclesiastical centers.

Less than an hour after his return from one of these journeys he was called to a private sitting-room in his hotel, and there found awaiting him Andrea Valenti, Adelina's uncle. The old patrician offered no greeting to the supposed Englishman, but curtly requested him to come to the Valenti palace. A carriage was waiting for them at the *porte-cochère*. Montrose saw fit to acquiesce. He had often been a guest at that old palace which was both home and studio to the famous painter. As they rode along there was no conversation between the two men, Valenti ignoring the presence of the other as completely as if he did not exist.

Finally they reached the palace, and Montrose was ushered into the drawing-room by Valenti. The artist's two sons were there, having been called by their father from Rome, where both were high officials of the Italian kingdom. When the heavy door was closed, Montrose found himself facing all three, who

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were grim and stern as judges. Valenti spoke of the escutcheon of his family all unsullied. His voice broke when he said that he had not guarded his niece Adelina as he should —she who had been committed to his care by her dying mother, she who was the daughter of his brother, Colonel Valenti, a man who had fallen face to the enemy while leading his regiment against the forces of tyranny. Valenti further went on to say that it had been brought to his attention by a servant of his house that his niece had been seen in the company of the Englishman, George Esmond, in picture galleries, music studios, theaters, and other public places without a chaperone. This could not be condoned in a lady of her rank. Neither was it honorable for a man of Esmond's maturer years to lead a girl in her teens to cast prudence to the winds and fly in the face of all the barriers which birth and family had hedged around her. Weeping was in his voice again as he admitted that he had allowed the demands of his art to consume the time he should have devoted to the care of his young niece, whom he had vowed to cherish as his own daughter.

Montrose was not a little puzzled as to Andrea Valenti's meaning.

"I wish to state," he began; but the other, ignoring him, continued his discourse.

The Englishman was a man of culture, though he had forgotten honor. He claims to be a man of wealth and position. Let him go with them to the English consul and prove his claims, then let him marry Adelina without delay. Such a procedure alone could amend his former conduct.

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Montrose attempted to excuse his conduct by speaking of the customs in vogue in different countries. Then, in a grandiose manner, he said:

“Your niece is to me as a newly-blown rose, sparkling, unsullied, untouched, in the morning dew of spring.”

“Did I doubt it,” returned the old Sicilian, “I would have driven my stiletto through your heart to-day in the sitting-room of your hotel.”

Montrose was in a dilemma. He could not identify himself at the office of the English consul as George Esmond of London. Repeatedly he had spoken of that person as an old family friend, and a visit to him would reveal the falsehood. Therefore he felt obliged to resort to one of the artifices which he had ready for emergencies.

He had prepared ordination papers for one George Esmond, priest of the archdiocese of Westminster, England. A number of letters, apparently from various English Roman Catholic Church dignitaries, had been written by him. Father Esmond was highly recommended by those bishops and prominent priests. The two young men went with Montrose to his hotel. He procured the papers, and they returned together. Some of the writings were in English, and others in Latin. The Valentis were proficient in both these languages, and they read carefully the commendations.

Montrose had hoped that they, thinking him to be a priest, would scout the idea of giving Adelina in marriage to him, and thus he might go free. He well knew the readiness with which Sicilian stilettos

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spring from their scabbards, and wished that a truce might be established between him and the male Valenti.

Andrea Valenti was outraged at the imposition which Montrose had practiced on them. He drew his stiletto and poised it in his hand, ready to drive it against the breast of the supposed George Esmond.

“Dare you desecrate my threshold,” he shouted, “and insult my adopted daughter by your unholy attentions? Dog and poltroon, your accursed life”—when the door opened and Adelina rushed between her uncle and her lover. She had just heard of Montrose’s presence in the house, and she was waiting outside the door when her uncle’s voice and threatening words apprised her of the serious nature of the meeting.

Her relatives made known to her the contents of the letters Montrose had showed them. Adelina was horrified.

“Why have you deceived me?” asked the unhappy girl. “Have you won my heart that you might mock me and cast my affections under your feet?”

The pseudo Esmond, with tears in his eyes, pleaded with Adelina. He urged that his great love for her had led him to his present plight, and that he had not revealed his identity to her before because he feared she would cast him from her. At her word he would return to London and serve his Church with the truest allegiance of which his heart was capable.

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This appeal not meeting with response, he said, finally:

“Adelina, I am wealthy. I have both talents and education. Come with me home to England. I will marry you there before minister or magistrate, as you will. Years of love and devotion shall be yours. I will atone for my deception, which, after all, was by reason of my love for you, by living my life for you. I will make my way in the world, never fear.”

These words had scarcely left his mouth when the male Valentis surrounded him with their stilettos like a wall of steel.

“Dog and poltroon!” again Andrea shouted. “You shall never again see London. Before morning the fish will be feasting on your body at the bottom of the Bay of Naples.”

Here Adelina interposed hastily and imperatively. She dared her relatives to strike her lover. Throwing her arms around him, she told them that their daggers first must pierce her own body before reaching his.

Reluctantly the Valentis sheathed their stilettos. Andrea opened the door and pointed to the street.

“Go!” he commanded, “and remember that if word or deed of yours attain the honor of my house, the sanctuary of your London church will not save you from the ‘blood revenge.’” The three men tapped their stiletto scabbards significantly.

Montrose lost no time in his departure. Then Andrea said to his niece: “I have been unable to protect you from insult here. In the suburbs an old retainer and his wife are caretakers of a house be-

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longing to our estate. They shall make a home for you for the present. You heard my parting words to that villain. Let them be remembered."

In the old days Montrose had written Adelina letters telling of his love and filled with terms of endearment. These letters were either unsigned, or signed with his assumed name, yet his handwriting was markedly characteristic. It was usually upright and square, sometimes a bold backhand; but it was always his, unmistakably. He had supposed that Adelina had not retained these tell-tale letters. It was only shortly before his last journey away from Naples that Montrose discovered that Adelina had kept many of the ardent epistles.

After the scene with the male Valenti, Montrose wished more than ever to gain possession of these letters, and he determined to do so at any price.

He sought and obtained opportunity to meet Adelina. She did not know that he was biding his time to disappear from her forever. He did not dare ask the girl outright for the letters, for that might excite her suspicion of his purpose; and did she turn against him, there were too many Sicilian stilettos conveniently near, ready to leap from their scabbards.

Montrose thought to enter her apartments when she was absent, and seize the letters, but the caretakers seemed ever present. One day he learned that they would accompany her to her uncle's for the afternoon. Here was the opportunity for which he had waited.

He went to his room and became very busy in writing. He had just received a letter from the arch-

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bishop in San Francisco, it having been sent to his address in Rome and forwarded to the general office in Naples. It was in the archbishop's handwriting and contained data regarding the pious fund litigation, as well as other official matter. Montrose read the letter carefully and wrote, in his square, unmistakable chirography, a number of marginal notes on the paper, indicating what his reply would be.

Looking up from his work, he saw that it was getting late and that he must go at once or Adelina would have returned from her uncle's. Hastily he thrust the archbishop's letter into the breast-pocket of his coat, and made quick time to Adelina's house. He opened the door with a skeleton key. Searching through her desk he found a package of his letters to her. Looking up, he saw her entering the door. Montrose had not expected her so soon. She had returned alone, the old servants having delayed on the way to chat a few moments with friends.

Adelina was amazed when she saw her lover rummaging in her private desk. He thrust the letters into the breast-pocket of his coat and rushed to the door. She seized him by the arm and cried:

"O sweetheart, sweetheart! You must not leave me!"

He tried to brush her aside, but she clung to him. Then he pushed her violently from him.

"Back! Curse you!" he cried. "I have done with you forever. Curse you and your high and mighty relatives! Let me pass."

Then he cursed her in the Italian tongue, in the violent words of the Southland. The full realization

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of Montrose's character came to the unhappy girl. She flew at him and wrenched the packet of letters from his pocket. He snatched them back from her and struck her a severe blow in the face. She fell against the couch: bleeding and half fainting she clung to it for support. With a mighty effort she arose and threw herself across the open door.

"O, do not leave me, my soul!" she said, in Italian. "You must not go."

He turned to the window and opened it, cursing her again as he did so; then he sprang to the ground, a few feet below. Thence he vaulted over the low wall into the street. From the sidewalk he removed his hat smilingly, and bowed gracefully toward the open window, as though his manner of leaving the house thus was all a joke and understood perfectly by the person inside.

"Addio!" he said, replaced his hat, and was gone.

Montrose felt sure that Adelina had no letters from him other than those in her desk. He now felt safe, and returned with a light heart to his hotel. He immediately gathered up his belongings and went to a railway station. He bought a ticket to some distant city, intending to double across Europe and elude pursuit, should any be attempted.

It was more than a fortnight before he reached Rome, having been in St. Petersburg and London and many intermediate cities.

Adelina lay helpless in the doorway for some time after Montrose left her. Then she struggled to her feet and staggered across the room to the couch. She was alone in the house, having dismissed her maid

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for the afternoon, and the caretaker had not yet returned. There was no one to whom to call. She tried to collect her senses. She clenched her hands and bit her tongue in her effort to realize what had happened. Something crackled in her hand. She looked down and saw a letter. It was addressed to "The Reverend Michael Montrose, Rome," and so forth. She took the paper from the envelope and read the unfamiliar handwriting, when some marginal notes caught her eye. They were written in the familiar square hand of "George Esmond." Some heart-string seemed to snap.

When her maid returned, Adelina bade her prepare for a journey. They boarded the late train for Rome. On arriving there they secured lodgings across the street from the address given in the letter to Montrose. Here the girl waited and watched. Inquiries brought the information that Father Michael Montrose lived at the address given. He was not now at home, she was told. He had been away much of late, and had paid but one short visit to his rooms for a considerable period.

After two weeks of weary waiting Adelina saw a carriage drive up to the door across the street, from which a man in clerical garb alighted. The well-kept beard was gone, so were the jaunty gray clothes of London cut. Even in cassock and biretta, and all shaven, she recognized her former lover.

That night she returned to Naples. She had been betrayed and forsaken.

Subsequently Montrose had heard from time to time of the success of Signora Adelina Valenti in

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grand opera. Her fame in a few years had become European. His connection with her was as a closed book; he never expected it to reopen. Now she and he were in the same city! Perhaps she would know him. He felt like some trapped wild animal.

A distant locomotive whistle reached his ears. He looked at his watch. It was exactly ten-forty o'clock. "The train is on time," he thought. "The archbishop will be at his home in twenty minutes. Shall I go to see him to-night or not?"

He opened his door and stepped into the hall.

CHAPTER XV.

Rover Seeks an Explanation.

FATHER UNDERWOOD'S dog, Rover, felt that too little attention had been given him that day, his master having been very busily occupied; so he evidently thought that he would investigate the matter, and came into the house to seek an explanation of his master's conduct.

As Montrose came out of his door, Rover, with a wag of his tail, went to meet him. He had been so accustomed to kindly treatment in that house that he considered every one there his friend, though he had seen but very little of Montrose.

As the dog came up, all wags and happiness, Montrose reached out and gave him a vicious kick, while he said with equal viciousness:

"Confound you, you cur; get out of here! I'll shoot you yet!"

The kick struck the dog on the head, making an ugly cut, which commenced to bleed profusely. Rover gave a sharp yelp of surprise and pain. Father Underwood heard the yelp as well as the threat, and sprang into the hall.

"You shoot my dog, if you dare!" Then he added, "Come here, Rover, poor doggie."

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The dog came up to him, and when Underwood saw the deep cut on the head of the poor animal his indignation burst forth anew:

“If ever you kick this dog again I’ll thrash you for it, you miserable, heartless coward!”

Montrose had supposed Underwood to be upstairs, and thus out of hearing. He was therefore deeply chagrined at his appearance on the scene, and also more than taken back by the signs of anger which he had exhibited. He had thought Underwood to be of very easy disposition, and this revelation of what might be his possible temper if aroused disquieted him very greatly. Here was a new factor with which to deal.

Things seemed to be going against him all at once. These thoughts rushed through his mind with rapidity. However, almost instantly he was transformed into the suave gentleman.

“I beg your pardon, Father Underwood. I had no idea the dog is yours. I thought him some stray animal that had found his way in here.”

Underwood was bending over the dog, but straightened himself as Montrose uttered these words. As he did so, Montrose involuntarily took note of his sturdiness of figure. How tall he looked! How strong!

Underwood was composed now, but a dangerous light showed in his eyes as he said, in a calm, low voice, but with incision that cut like steel:

“Monsignor Montrose, excuse me, but you lie! You knew that dog is mine.”

“I assure you, Father Underwood, I did not. I

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would not have kicked him had I the least suspicion that he belongs to you."

"Nobody but a coward would kick an unoffending dog, even though his ownership was unknown."

The two men stood there; Underwood straight and tall, while Montrose seemed to shrink into himself. As a lightning flash, in that brief time, Underwood read Montrose's soul. It was a revelation to him. For a few seconds he looked Montrose squarely in the face, when the latter began again with his apology:

"I hope, Father Underwood, that you will forget this little incident."

"Never! It is impossible, for by this 'little incident,' as you call it, I have been given a vision undreamed of. I now know you as you are."

"O Father Underwood, let us forget this little unpleasantness," he began in a conciliatory tone, but with an expression unpleasant to see. "I am sure—"

"Excuse me," Underwood replied, "but I must take Rover out. He seems to be suffering." Then to his dog he said, "Come, Rover."

Underwood, without further words, left the hall, Rover following him. The priest got warm water and gently bathed the dog's head. It was an ugly wound, and Rover looked up at him understandingly.

"Poor doggie, I am very sorry; but we'll fix it so you'll be all right by to-morrow."

Rover affectionately lapped Underwood's hand. It was his only way of saying: "Thank you. I love you. I know you would never kick me."

After Montrose was left alone in the hall he leaned

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wearily against the balustrade. Two great surprises had been given him that evening, and within the space of an hour. The first, the fact of Signora Valenti's presence in California, had dazed him. He had barely managed to draw himself together when there was thrust on him the insight into what might possibly be expected of Underwood in certain contingencies. While the former surprise was the more serious, the latter had potentialities which might be unfortunately inconvenient.

Montrose returned to his study. He was in a very uncertain frame of mind. He usually thought clearly and acted quickly and decisively. Now his mind seemed benumbed, and action was distasteful.

The foibles of the archbishop were well known to Montrose. He had read them carefully, and by playing on them he had been able to live in the good graces of his superior for twenty years. Archbishop Boylston was sincerely devoted to the interests of his Church. Moreover, he was of irreproachable morals, and insisted that the lives of his priests reach the same standard. Any lapse from that standard meant that condign punishment awaited the offender, if the archbishop was convinced of his guilt.

The monsignor looked again at his watch. It lacked five minutes of eleven. At eleven the archbishop would reach his own house. He took from its hiding-place the paper which Mrs. Stoddard had signed, and laid it carefully in his pocketbook. He felt that the paper was the result of clever diplomatic work.

He could scarcely compose himself while waiting

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the stroke of eleven. The positive, determined look on Father Underwood's face had been very disconcerting. Then his declaration, "I now know you as you are!" Possibly that was bravado. No, Underwood was not the man to use such words lightly. Confound his dog, anyway! He despised the dog because it adored its master. Too much adoration had been given that same master. It would soon cease, however.

At that moment a cuckoo-clock over the mantel began calling the hour, eleven. A moment later he took the receiver from the hook and was about to call for the archbishop's private telephone number. It was not in the telephone book, and only the initiated knew of it. That ring was sure to bring His Grace to the 'phone, if he was within reaching distance.

"I'll wait five minutes more. Surely his Grace will be at home then." He hung up the receiver, and sat back in his chair. He must be losing his nerve. He opened a drawer and took out the bottle of French brandy. He was about to drink from it when he remembered that the archbishop would surely detect its odor on his breath. Montrose replaced the brandy bottle in the drawer.

Life in San Francisco was slow, he thought. It was that which was getting on his nerves. He had lived here now several months, and had taken little or no hold on the life of the city. He would not remain long in California after this matter regarding Underwood was over. There were large cities in Mexico and South America which would repay him

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for a visit. The apostolic delegate would come to the coast soon, on his way to the Philippines. He would persuade the archbishop to ask that gentleman, as a favor, that Monsignor Montrose would be delegated to visit the Southern republics and prepare accounts of the condition of the Churches there. Montrose's blood tingled as he thought of the life he might enjoy once again.

Europe had grown rather narrow for him. San Francisco must be his headquarters for some time to come. No one here knew him other than as Monsignor Montrose, the able and punctilious ecclesiastic. However, the fear of Adelina Valenti would not down. She was in San Francisco, and when Underwood had spoken his name to her she had become incensed—but only because he is a clergyman, it must be. It could not be that she knew that Monsignor Montrose and George Esmond are one and the same person.

He thought of how the archbishop would spurn him did he know his real character. His Grace was sincere and honest. There could be no question about that.

"I, too, would be sincere and honest could I be in Archbishop Boylston's position. I would give my time and energy to ruling men and directing the destinies of the Church, and would feel no inclination to sidestep the path of convention."

Montrose was not the first man to deceive himself by such thoughts as these.

Underwood had spoken that very night of thrashing him. He wondered that he had submitted so tamely to this, as well as to the words, "You lie."

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Montrose was in the prime of life, and had an abundance of strength and courage. However, it was not wise to provoke Underwood to a trial of these; that would serve his purpose the least of all. Above all things he must appear friendly to the younger man.

He looked at the clock. It was a quarter after eleven. He must delay no longer. This time he called for the private telephone number, and in a moment was in communication with the archbishop's house. Father Devereaux, the secretary, answered the call. The archbishop was at home; had arrived nearly half an hour before. Senator Bisletti had brought him from the Third and Townsend Station in his automobile. They had ridden on the train together from Menlo Park. The archbishop was now at his devotions, preparatory to retiring. He knew that he wished to see Monsignor Montrose, however, and had spoken of sending for him the first thing to-morrow, after his early mass. At this point the archbishop, who evidently had overheard the conversation, asked his secretary to request the monsignor to come to him at once. Father Devereaux did so, and Montrose started out for the archepiscopal residence.

Ten minutes later he arrived there. The archbishop was standing in the doorway awaiting him.

"I have been very anxious to see you, my dear Monsignor, and had intended to call for you early to-morrow. Come into my study."

When seated in the study the archbishop was too full of some subject to see that Montrose was much preoccupied. The cause of his Grace's exuberance was seen soon.

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On the train with him were Senator Bisletti and Doctor Holmes, the Unitarian minister. Senator Bisletti had just concluded a series of lectures to the students of Stanford University on Social Economics. Doctor Holmes had commenced another series, on Ethics; and his friend, Bisletti, had been present at the initial lecture. Unexpectedly Doctor Holmes had been summoned to the East on urgent business, and could not conclude his lectures. The faculty committee had deputed him to select any lecturer he deemed competent to complete the required number of lectures. The usual honorarium would, of course, be paid.

"Doctor Holmes told me," said the archbishop, "that he is anxious for Father Underwood to give the lectures in his stead. Both he and Bisletti heard him lecture last winter for the Catholic Truth Society, in the Metropolitan Temple, on Ethics or some kindred subject, and they were much pleased. Doctor Holmes even said that he would be delighted if Father Underwood would deliver those same lectures in his church. All this pleased me very much, when I thought of you, and how you—Good heavens, Monsignor! What can be the matter?" the archbishop exclaimed, breaking off suddenly.

At the mention of Father Underwood the monsignor had covered his face with his hands. Deep emotion shook him, and he burst into tears.

"What can be the matter, Monsignor?" the archbishop inquired again.

Montrose controlled himself, took from his pocket-book the paper signed by Mrs. Stoddard, and handed it to the archbishop.

CHAPTER XVI.

Unexpected Reefs.

THE archbishop hastily read the paper.

"My God!" he exclaimed.

For the moment his voice failed him. He was overcome by the contents of the statement. He again read it, slowly and carefully. In it was stated that the undersigned had for several years been a penitent of Father Underwood. Formerly his advice and admonitions in the confessional had been very helpful to her spiritually, and he had gained her full confidence. For some time, however, his words had tended to show more than a fatherly interest in her. Recently he had assumed the attitude of a lover; and on one occasion, in the confessional, he had proposed to her that he and she quietly leave California and go to some distant place, where neither of them was known, there to enter into marriage.

Filled with horror at such an impious suggestion, she had left the confessional immediately. Later she had told all to Monsignor Montrose, in his confessional, and had asked his advice. The preparation of this statement was the result. It was signed: "Eleanor Stoddard. Maria Shields, witness."

Finally the archbishop laid aside the paper and said to Montrose:

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"You might have saved yourself the pain of coming personally with this letter. You could have sent it through the mail, registered. Your duty would have been fulfilled by thus making sure that the letter would reach my hands alone."

By this remark Montrose was, in a measure, placed on the defensive.

"It was only this evening that I was able to secure this paper, Archbishop, and I wished you to know of it at once. For this reason I 'phoned you."

"Very well, very well," returned the archbishop. He arose from his chair and slowly paced the room. He was much moved.

The monsignor was not certain just what course to pursue. He had expected that the archbishop, on reading Mrs. Stoddard's statement, would be aroused to a high pitch of indignation. Then it would be easy to lead him, while in this frame of mind, to believe that the extreme ecclesiastical punishment would be fitting for a man like Underwood. Perfidy to the Church was treason, and in dealing with treason the archbishop could be another Brutus.

Should Underwood be deposed, he would of course demand from the archbishop the reason therefor. That prelate could decline to give any reason for his action other than that private or professional information in his possession convinced him of Underwood's unworthiness for the priesthood, and that he had deposed him from that honor accordingly.

It is within the rights of a bishop or religious superior to lay claim to such power, and act in accordance, and even to refuse to the accused any ecclesi-

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astical trial whatsoever. The bishop or superior may even decline to make known to the accused the nature of the accusation.

The monsignor wished Archbishop Boylston to make use of these prerogatives in dealing with Underwood. Ordinarily his Grace had been very ready to accept suggestions. Here was a concrete case before him. Montrose had wished to induce him to act with the great powers intrusted him by the Church.

It had been easy in theory, but now it might be difficult to reduce it to practice.

After a few minutes the archbishop resumed his seat.

"We have here a statement signed by Eleanor Stoddard," said he. "I think that a counter-statement from Father Underwood would be in order. What is your opinion in the matter?"

"Do you not see, Archbishop, that it is impossible for you to speak to Underwood concerning this question? You are bound by the secrecy of the confessional. Read what Mrs. Stoddard says: 'I submit this statement on condition that Archbishop Boylston is bound *sub sigillo*, to the same extent that is my own confessor.' "

"When I read the statement I noticed the clause to which you refer, but I am not sure as to my obligation of absolute secrecy," said his Grace.

The monsignor spoke quickly, "But your reading of the statement indicated your willingness to accept the conditions. You see, Archbishop, I must protect the rights of my penitent."

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Montrose thought he had never seen the archbishop so slow in responding to suggestions.

"Strange that the archbishop does not show temper and say sharp things, and tell of his plans for the punishment of Underwood! It is puzzling," thought Montrose.

"It may be as you say, Monsignor. I wish to do by all concerned what is right." The archbishop spoke as though he was weary.

Montrose began: "I know, Archbishop, it is very late. I have laid the cause before you, as I felt it my duty to do—"

The archbishop raised his hand deprecatingly.

"It is late," he said, "but not too late to consider a question of such great moment as this. My one desire in life is to increase the dominion of Holy Church, and to keep her good name unspotted before the world. I would not spare from proper punishment my own brother, if he was a priest here and guilty of grave breach of the law of the Church."

"I feel assured you would do your full duty, Archbishop," said the monsignor. Perhaps the archbishop would prove manageable, after all.

"Monsignor, you shed tears a few moments ago when you handed me that signed statement. There are no tears in my eyes, but my soul is filled with tears as I consider the contents of this paper. Next to my care for the Church my chief solicitude is for my priests. I wish to share their life, to labor with them and for them."

"Your words do you great honor, Archbishop," said the monsignor. He was completely nonplused

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by the archbishop's mood, and did not know exactly how to meet it.

"If, however," continued the archbishop, "a priest shows himself unworthy. I must visit on him, in accordance with his delinquency, the punishment which the Church has ordained."

"Most assuredly," again assented the monsignor. At last light seemed to be showing through the clouds.

"I except no one," his Grace went on. "Even you, Monsignor, as great as has been your service to the Church and to me, should you prove recreant—"

"My heavens, Archbishop!" interrupted the startled monsignor. "I—"

"A hypothetical case, Monsignor, a hypothetical case," said the archbishop, noticing the monsignor's perturbation.

"I have known you, Monsignor," he continued, "a little more than twenty years, is it not?"

"Yes, Archbishop," said Montrose.

The other went on: "My memory of you goes back to the night when our priests and people gave me a public reception."

"I remember it perfectly, your Grace. It was a few days after your arrival in San Francisco."

"Yes," replied the archbishop. "The morning preceding the reception I had been walking with Cardinal Sanchez over what he called 'Old San Francisco.' He told me that in 1850, when first he saw the city, the tidewater reached as far as the present Montgomery Street, and that the mission district was a half day's journey over the sand into the country."

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"Quite interesting, I'm sure," said Montrose. The archbishop's reminiscent frame of mind was a puzzle to him.

His Grace continued, without noticing the interruption:

"After a while we stood on the corner of the street, near the Palace Hotel. Here was the first site of St. Patrick's Church, his Eminence told me. I recollect very distinctly the crowded state of Market Street that day. I do not remember that I ever saw even Broadway, New York, more congested. A burly policeman was stationed at either curbstone. Occasionally the officers would halt the struggling press of vehicles and allow a stream of pedestrians to pass over the crossing, from street to street. Then the vehicles would be allowed their turn, and so on."

"Archbishop," said the monsignor, "excuse me, but it is getting very late, and an affair of such great interest to Holy Church should be considered at once."

He was becoming more and more mystified at the archbishop's condition of mind. It was entirely different from any in which he had ever seen his Grace.

"It is certainly getting late," assented the archbishop, "but I can not sleep after hearing such ill news as you have brought me, and I am sure that your own sorrow will cause you also a wakeful night."

The archbishop was not speaking in conscious sarcasm.

The monsignor made no further objection, and the archbishop went on:

"I was speaking of the pedestrians and the ve-

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hicles on the street crossings. I can still see that scene. It was much unlike anything I had expected to find in distant San Francisco.

“The people were hurrying across, while the officers, with raised staffs, were holding back the teams—I am relating now a special incident of that day. In the middle of the street a powerful horse, attached to a heavy express wagon, grew restive and sprang on the crossing. The driver tugged with all his might on the reins, but he could not restrain the animal. Directly in his path was a baby carriage containing a child. The little carriage was overturned. The horse reared, and in the fraction of a minute would have brought his iron-shod front hoof down on carriage and occupant. The people on either side of the plunging horse had shrunk back into safety. It seemed that the death of the child was inevitable. A hush came over that busy, bustling street. Suddenly a young man sprang from the crowd and darted under the maddened horse. He snatched the child from the carriage and drew back with incredible quickness. The child was saved, and as the hoofs of the horse descended they barely missed the man’s head.”

“A very dramatic incident, indeed,” commented Montrose.

“Very,” replied the archbishop; then continued:

“The policemen were at the head of the horse at once. It was made quiet and driven away; very soon traffic was resumed, as before. I saw plainly the child’s rescuer as he came through the crowd to the sidewalk, where the cardinal and I were standing.

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He was tall, but rather slender, and his face showed his youthfulness even more than did his form."

The monsignor started, as if to speak, but did not; and his Grace continued his narrative:

"Later that day Cardinal Sanchez and I were at the old ferry building at the foot of Market Street. The new building was not yet erected, of course. In the waiting room I saw again the youth who had shown such courage earlier in the day. I spoke to him and commended him for what he had done, and asked him his name. 'My name is Donald Underwood,' he replied. Further conversation with him brought forth the fact that he was a Catholic.'"

"I know very little of Father Underwood's early life," said Montrose.

The turn which affairs had taken was becoming now not only puzzling, but alarming. He wondered if his ill star would envelop him in its shadow of defeat in San Francisco as well as in Rome. He must allow his Grace to talk on, however, and await his own opportunity.

"You know little of Father Underwood's early life you say, Monsignor? He has been very frank and open with me almost from the day I met him in the ferry building. Why, of course, you know that he was born within a few miles of San Francisco, that he received a great part of his education in Berkeley, and that he has lived nearly his whole life in this part of the State.

"Fate has played strangely with him. The sequel to events in his life, of many years ago, has come to light as recently as your return to San Francisco. I

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am not free to tell you more, but I mention this merely to show you that I have considerable knowledge of Father Underwood's life and character."

Montrose was dismayed. The archbishop was speaking in enigmas, but plainly there was understanding between his Grace and Underwood, of which the monsignor had never dreamed.

After a moment's thought the archbishop continued:

"I know," he said, "that Father Underwood is strongly drawn to the modern trend of thought. That thought is entirely intellectual, as I understand it, and in no way a moral basis for living. It is an attempt to find a new apologetic for the claims of the Church."

Montrose exclaimed: "It is heresy. Archbishop! In fact, many of the Roman authorities are calling it the synthesis of all heresies. Personally I know that the pope is preparing an encyclical which will deal properly with 'Modernism,' as it is called."

"I do not know," said his Grace, "what opinion the theologians at Rome hold on these questions. However, when Peter speaks from the 'Fisherman's Throne' there can be no further dispute.

"As for me, the demonstration of the soundness of the claims of the Church is found in the works of Thomas Aquinas and his followers. Higher criticism of the Scriptures, also of Church history, may be useful; but I do not expect practical results from them. Underwood does not share this opinion, I know; but I find no fault with him for this."

"Archbishop," said Montrose, "I fear you do not

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realize sufficiently what a dangerous thing this 'Modernism' is. I never dreamed that Underwood is disposed to favor such strange ideas. It is truly a revelation to me. I might say that it is an explanation of the letter I handed you a little while ago; that is, an explanation of the cause of the letter being written. Without faith there can be no safeguard for morals; and if these new ideas are adopted they will destroy the foundation of the ancient edifice of faith. The so-called 'Modernism' is dangerous, exceedingly dangerous! The Holy See will act summarily when the proper hour strikes."

The archbishop took up the statement signed by Mrs. Stoddard, and again carefully read it. As he supposed, it came to him with the sanctity of the confessional testifying to its truthfulness, and contained a most severe indictment.

As his Grace bent over the letter in a mystified way, Montrose was endeavoring to read his features, and to divine what was passing in his mind. The monsignor was something of an adept in this work, but to-night his skill seemed to have deserted him.

At last the prelate said:

"There is an intimate relation, I know, between faith and morals," he said; "but this 'Modernism,' as you term it, is not only speculative, but also is too formless to endanger the faith of any one."

"Archbishop," said Montrose, "the hand of Rome is on the pulse of the world, and she is quick to detect symptoms of ailment. I know in what light she is disposed to consider 'Modernism.' Its votaries are in university and seminary chairs. The new thought is

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the greatest evil in the life of our Church to-day. Faith and morals stand or fall together. There can be no middle ground."

The archbishop was not disposed to argue the question. His mind was working on a problem that confronted him there and then. "Modernism" appertained to the indefinite future.

"Monsignor Montrose," his Grace said, "the paper which you have brought to me contains evidence of the weightiest nature. It is a statement that a burdened soul felt it obligatory to make, and was given in the sacred relation of penitent to confessor. In itself, however, it is not convincing proof unless corroborated by other testimony."

"Archbishop," replied Montrose, "it grieves me very much to say that there is other evidence. You remember, of course, our conversation this morning. It does not seem strange to me, in the light of what I have seen, that matters have arrived at such a deplorable pass."

"You consider, then, that the proof of Underwood's guilt is absolute?" asked the archbishop.

"Well—really—" the monsignor began in feigned embarrassment.

The archbishop's face fell.

"I understand you," said he, "and I respect the feeling which causes you to hesitate. We shrink from saying or thinking evil of those we love."

The monsignor's heart leaped with pleasure. His Grace had at last proved tractable.

"I shall deal justly with Underwood," his Grace continued. "I do not agree with you as to his guilt,

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but I must act for the good of the Church. The sanctity of the confessional must be protected. I intend to do my duty as head of this diocese. Also, I shall punish the guilty only, not the innocent."

More and more confusing was the situation becoming. The archbishop was beyond understanding.

"Archbishop," said Montrose, "it is now very late; or rather, very early. I think I would better go."

It was far past midnight.

The two men passed together into the hall, and soon parted.

The statement signed by Mrs. Stoddard remained in the archbishop's keeping. The monsignor had forgotten to ask for its return to himself.

CHAPTER XVII.

An Exchange of Confidence.

SIGNORA ADELINA VALENTI did not continue her journey beyond San Jose, but returned to San Francisco the evening of the day of setting out. The air was still too cool for one who was a semi-invalid to travel very far in the open, though it was late in the spring.

The following afternoon she again ordered her automobile from the garage, and in a few minutes was at Mrs. Stoddard's door. The signora was wonderfully improved from her condition of a few months before. In her favor were youth and an indomitable will. She had been determined to recover health and strength, and to make the most of the gifts that had been given to her.

Mrs. Stoddard greeted her friend cordially.

"My dear Adelina, how pleased I am to see you, and how well you are looking! The age of miracles has not passed, surely."

"I am feeling very well, thank you," replied the signora.

"What an immense machine your automobile is! A Winton, is it not?"

"Yes, a Winton limousine. Whizzing through the country in a motor car is glorious!"

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Soon they were seated in Mrs. Stoddard's pleasant sitting-room. There was a strong contrast in the appearance of the two women, though both were brunettes and petite in form. In comparison with her visitor, Mrs. Stoddard seemed matronly. Signora Valenti was slender almost to fragility. Her face was a true index to her character. There showed thereon the indefinable marks of genius. Youth showed there also, and much good looks. The curves of her face were delicate, yet powerful, and the dark, clustering hair above the temples gave an artistic appearance to the head. In each feature one could see depicted the wonderful will which had defied sickness and poverty, and had brought its possessor a renewal of health.

Signora Valenti began the conversation:

"How pleasant it is to be with one's friends!"

"There is nothing equal to it. Friends are one's most valuable possessions," replied Mrs. Stoddard.

"I can make any sacrifice for my friends, and could die for those I love. But my enemies—the blood of the Borgias runs in my veins! However," she added laughingly, "I have not called to tell you that. I wish to invite you to come with me on an automobile excursion soon. Our weather prophet tells us that warm days and nights are coming. It was not till yesterday that my physician would consent for me to take a long trip, and I 'phoned to you at once, but could not reach you. I was determined to go out into the open air immediately, and so went without you, my dear friend."

"I am delighted to accept your invitation. I re-

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gret that I could not have been with you yesterday. Besides, my day in the city here was a very unpleasant one."

"O, poor Eleanor! You are sometimes unhappy. Is it so?" said the girl, caressingly.

"I am often very unhappy, you dear child. How good you are to inquire!" replied Mrs. Stoddard.

"Then I am the more sorry that you could not have been with me yesterday. The country is beautiful beyond compare."

"I think the Santa Clara Valley is one of the most beautiful places I have seen," said Mrs. Stoddard.

"The Santa Clara Valley, you call it? I like that name. We crossed on the ferry from San Francisco to Oakland, and then we motored for miles on a splendid boulevard. How refreshing the air was! On our left were the green fields near us, with blue mountains in the distance. On our right was the grass-covered tilled land and the shining waters of the bay."

"You were in the country of orchards. The trees must be in full blossom now, are they not?"

"Yes, they are beautiful. After a while we passed through a portion of the valley that was thickly covered with fruit trees in blossom. There were several towns along the way, but one particularly impressed me. It has an Italian name.

"San Leandro, perhaps," said Mrs. Stoddard.

"San Leandro, yes," replied the signora. "To the right and left were mountains, while all around us were trees—such trees! The blossoms were white and pink, and the tiny green leaves tried to show

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themselves. Overhead it was hazy, and the breeze shook the tree branches. The blossoms fell to the ground like snow. It was all in keeping—the clouds, gray and high, and the falling snow—just like the winters in your East.”

“The fruit blossom time in California is one of the wonders of the State. I wish you could see the almond blossoms along the San Joaquin River. Their white blossom appears before the leaf, and the effect is unique. From the distance the valley seems covered with huge drifts of snow. Fringing the hills are the yellow poppies.”

“I have seen the poppies. We passed many of them yesterday. ‘*Eschscholtzia*,’ I believe is their right name, is it not?”

“Yes,” replied Mrs. Stoddard. “They are so called after the botanist Schultz. However, that name always seems so difficult to pronounce that I seldom attempt it, but am content with plain ‘poppy.’ ”

“I shall paint pictures of the Santa Clara Valley. We kept on till we reached San Jose. That is a veritable garden of flowers. O, the hills and the blossoms! It is like Japan except the blossoms here have sweeter odor.”

“Then you have been in Japan?” asked Mrs. Stoddard.

“Yes. I was there in cherry blossom season. I sang my last grand opera in the Imperial Theater in Tokyo. There hemorrhages began, and I came to California. I invested my money here. ‘Invested,’ I said; but I was robbed, you know. The robbers shall suffer.” The Italian woman’s eyes glowed.

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"My friends," she continued, "wished me yesterday to remain over night in San Jose, and return here by train, as it had become so cool, but I told them I wished to return as I came. My chauffeur suggested that our return journey should be through San Mateo County, a shorter route, with no ferry to cross. I wished to see my blossoms again. Do you wonder?"

"No, indeed," replied Mrs. Stoddard.

"We returned on the road over which we had traveled shortly before. Two hours from the time I left San Jose I was in my room in the hotel here in San Francisco.

"I am still under the influence of the vision of beauty which I saw yesterday. Fragrant blossoms, splashes of white, green, and purple, the horizon limned with heavy clouds—all sped by us as though the Author of nature had prepared a grand panorama for our special benefit.

"Last night I dreamed the scene again, and the singing of angel voices seemed everywhere on field and hill and sky. I always associate beautiful scenery with music. These two are intertwined in my nature."

"I have traveled often the road of which you are speaking, and its beauty always thrills me, but with you as companion a new vista would be opened, I know."

"We have been speaking of my health and my enjoyments, while very, very little has been said of you. How selfish I have been! You are not looking so well as usual."

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"I felt ill last night, but I am better to-day." After a slight pause she continued: "Added unhappiness has come into my life of late, and yesterday it came to a culmination; at least, so it seemed to me. I can scarcely realize what happened."

In an instant Signora Valenti was kneeling at her friend's side, and had placed her arms about her waist.

"My dear heart," said she, "you are in sorrow. Let me help you. Just now you spoke of me as a child. I am not a child, and I have seen the world through and through."

"But, Adelina," said Mrs. Stoddard, with a somewhat wan smile, "I am older than you—"

"Older in years, a little, perhaps, but not in knowledge of life. Your lot has been a sheltered one—you have told me of your childhood and married life—but at least you have been protected. I have faced the world alone, and met it on its own terms. If I can help you in any way it is my heart's wish to do so."

"Listen, Adelina," said Mrs. Stoddard. "You seem so young, so fragile! I nearly doubt the evidence of my senses when I think of you singing in the Metropolitan Opera House in New York two years ago. I saw and heard you then. I was visiting my old home at the time. I remember how your voice swayed that great concourse of people, from orchestra to gallery.

"A few months ago I saw you very ill in that lodging-house, and my heart went out to you. You seem like a younger sister to me. I feel that I need help, but I can not burden you with my griefs."

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"I repeat your word to me, 'Listen!'" said Signora Valenti. "We need have little care as to the seeming nature of anything. The real must concern us. I was, to be sure, singing grand opera in New York; and I was ill unto death almost in that forlorn old mansion in San Francisco. I am here with you now. My health is returning to me rapidly. If I can help you, I will. Depend on it, I beg you."

"At another time—" began Mrs. Stoddard.

The Italian woman continued kneeling beside her friend. She arose and seated herself. For a moment her brilliant eyes steadied themselves on Mrs. Stoddard's face.

"I can not read the mind, that is beyond me; but I can read the heart. My dear friend feels affection for another, and all does not go smoothly."

"O if I could only tell you, could tell you!" Mrs. Stoddard returned.

The other began speaking slowly, but with deep feeling:

"When I was living in that lodging house I spoke to you of a great wrong done me. It is possible that you thought me delirious at the time."

"Yes, I believed you speaking in delirium, but Father Underwood insisted that your mind was unusually clear," was the reply.

"Father Underwood was right," continued the other. "I told you but a fraction of the whole. I could not bring myself at that time to give you my full confidence. I feel that I should do so now."

Signora Valenti told the story of her life in Naples

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with the pseudo George Esmond. Mrs. Stoddard listened intently.

"We vowed eternal loyalty to each other," said Adelina. "I gave my very soul to that man. When absent he would send me letters filled with burning words of love. I have the most of these letters. How fond and foolish I was, and how bitterly I have been punished: I could bring suffering on the author of my unhappiness—I know his real name and where he now is. Some way I do not wish to molest him, at least not to avenge my own wrongs. I would not allow him to play fast and loose with another's life as he has with mine."

Mrs. Stoddard came over and kissed Adelina on the forehead. "I appreciate your trust in me," she said.

After returning to her chair Mrs. Stoddard continued:

"Seldom does a woman allow any one to look into the hidden recesses of her heart and learn the secrets reposing there. When she does the privilege is given to the right person, and at an appropriate time. Thus I understand and value the confidence which you have given me to-day.

"I am in need of sympathy. Miss van Allston has been my one confidant. I still trust her, but my interest and hers center around the same object. At least, that is my conclusion. Consequently I do not now speak to her of that which lies nearest my heart.

"In distant Italy you gave your heart and honor into the keeping of one you loved and thought worthy. Even when his first deception was discovered

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you still trusted him. In the end you found him to be a thorough villain."

The dark eyes of Signora Valenti struck fire. She moved her lips as if to speak, but she did not.

Mrs. Stoddard continued:

"My heart is given to a man whom I believe to be entirely worthy. I know him, in fact, to be so."

"Ah, happy Eleanor!" said the listener. "Pray go on."

"He is in every way unlike the man of whom you told me, except that he, too, is a priest."

"But your Church, Eleanor. Does not that forbid your love for one of its ministers?"

"My Church undoubtedly does forbid it, but my religion does not. Religion often has a far wider and deeper meaning than does Church. I believe religion to be a spiritual bond uniting God and the soul. The place of the Church is to interpret God to the soul, and to make of the bond uniting the two a golden ladder from heaven to earth, up and down which go the angels."

"I know very little of these things; but the priest himself, he is under obligations to the Church, is he not?"

"Obligations, yes," replied Mrs. Stoddard. "Obligations imposed for a lifetime when the candidate for the priesthood is often a mere youth. Obligations are imposed touching the most sacred relations of the human heart, and under circumstances frequently which would invalidate any contract before the law."

Thus did Mrs. Stoddard try to reconcile her conscience.

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"Perhaps you are right," said the signora. "How does the priest think on these subjects? He certainly should be proud that you have dignified him with your love."

"I do not know his mind on these subjects, nor towards me," replied Mrs. Stoddard.

"I pity him for the loss of the knowledge of your love. Can not you in some way discover his attitude towards you? He may have difficulty in speaking openly under the circumstances. Certainly, I should think that to be the case. There must be some way of finding out just how he feels."

"There is no way of which I can think," replied Mrs. Stoddard. "I spoke to my friend, my one other confidant, and she could do nothing. She was spending the night with me. She was taken ill just after retiring, and the strangest thing happened. I had sent for the physician. Later I telephoned for this priest. He is very sympathetic and kind in illness, and I wished him to come to us that night. He came, and I can not forget his appearance when he saw her. He was exceedingly pale and worried. There seemed to be an understanding of some kind between them, much to my surprise. This understanding showed when they met, not in words exactly—though they addressed each other by their given names—but in looks. I can not describe it and I can not understand it. They were not lover-like, but seemed to be like people whose regard has grown with the flight of years, and whose personalities have been merged into one. Of course you have seen such instances. I suffered agony at what I saw that night!"

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Both women were silent for a moment, then Mrs. Stoddard continued:

"It is strange, wonderfully strange! I know they met when children, or hardly more than children. They did not see each other for many years, indeed not until within a few months, and I know they have seen very little of each other during these months. It is all so strange! I can not understand it. The woman is my dear friend, and one to whom I owe much, Miss van Allston."

"Miss van Allston!" echoed Adelina. "The beautiful, statuesque lady whom I have seen with you? I have felt that I would love her if I knew her."

"The priest," Mrs. Stoddard went on, somewhat absently, "is Father Underwood."

"Father Underwood!" again exclaimed the other. "I told you once that I know men, and that Father Underwood rings true. 'Personalities merged into one.' Happy are they who are thus blessed." After a moment's deep thought, Adelina added: "There must be, in the life of those two, some story reaching back into the years. There can be no other explanation."

"I was ill last night," said Mrs. Stoddard, "as I told you. I had an appointment last evening with Father Underwood. We have been managing some charity cases together. He is not the pastor of St. Carmel's, but is pro-rector. The pastor telephoned me, requesting to see me. I replied that I would call on him after my visit to Father Underwood. I do not like the pastor. His very presence is repulsive to me."

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Signora Valenti had grasped the arms of her chair and was sitting upright. Her face showed that some smoldering fire within was ready to burst forth into flame.

Mrs. Stoddard was not looking at her friend, and continued:

"I tried to question Father Underwood as to the meaning of that night at my house when Miss van Allston was ill, but he would not talk about it. Previously I had endeavored to learn from Miss van Allston the meaning of it all, but she, also, would tell me nothing.

"I was almost beside myself with anxiety and despair when I called on the pastor. I can not remember much of the interview. He seemed to mock me; I can not tell why. I spoke to him violently. Finally, I seemed to lose consciousness, partially. I can remember very little of what then happened except that I signed some paper, and that another signed it with me."

Mrs. Stoddard had been speaking with bowed head. When she looked up Signora Valenti was standing before her. Lightning was flashing from the Italian woman's eyes. She did not speak, but resumed her seat.

Mrs. Stoddard went on: "I do not remember the contents of the paper I signed. I think that it had some relation to Father Underwood and to me. I recollect returning home in a carriage. When once away from that man's presence I began to recover. Whatever the paper may be it is void, for I did not know what I was signing."

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Signora Valenti was again standing. Her hands were clenched and her lips were closed tightly. The spirit of the Borgias seemed to show on every feature. For a moment she could not speak; then she said:

"He did that! Monsignor Michael Montrose did that! Did he dare?"

"Do you know him?" asked Mrs. Stoddard, in surprise.

"Know him! He is George Esmond of Naples, the man who ruined my life. He struck me, and then deserted me."

Mrs. Stoddard looked at her visitor in horror.

The signora continued:

"You must obtain from him at once the paper you signed. Call him on the telephone and request an interview. I will go with you, but do not tell him that."

The signora was very urgent in her manner, and Mrs. Stoddard obeyed. She soon was speaking with him over the 'phone. The monsignor was at home, and would see Mrs. Stoddard at once.

As Mrs. Stoddard left the 'phone, Signora Valenti said:

"Let us leave now for our call on Monsignor Michael Montrose. The automobile will bring us there in a few minutes."

CHAPTER XVIII.

An Uninvited Guest.

MRS. STODDARD and Signora Valenti were conducted by the servant, Maria, to Montrose's private library. He had expected the coming of Mrs. Stoddard, and had given the servant orders accordingly.

The two women sat in the artistically appointed room, and awaited the monsignor. He was engaged with other callers, the girl had told them, but he would be free soon. Mrs. Stoddard paid little attention to the furnishings of the room. The atmosphere was too uncongenial. The Italian girl looked around, noting with careful glance each object of interest and the skillful groupings of the well-nigh priceless gems of art. It was not alone her sense of beauty that was touched. She was carried back to the old days in Naples when she and George Esmond, the English gentleman of wealth and position, had visited the splendid picture galleries, and together had feasted on the treasures they found. Halcyon days they were, but soon they passed away. Nothing was left save ashes of disappointment and memories of treachery.

Mrs. Stoddard was first to speak.

"Adelina," she said, "it was inexcusable for me to allow you to come here. I do not see why I was so thoughtless. The meeting with Monsignor Mon-

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trose can bring you nothing but pain. It is better for you to return to the automobile and await me there."

"No," said the other, "I shall stay here with you. Without aid you would be as little able, I fear, to deal with this monsignor as I was a half dozen years ago."

"Think of the unhappy reminders that may come," pleaded Mrs. Stoddard.

"Nevertheless, I shall remain with you," was the reply.

Immediately the voice of the monsignor was heard in the hall as he ushered his callers to the door. His even, resonant tones reached into his private library.

"I thank you, my dear Lady Ashmead, for your visit," he was saying. "I am delighted that you remembered me. I shall never forget the pleasure jaunt with you and your friends last year. I had not seen the Bay of Naples for some time, and its beauty had improved with age, like good wine. When are you to return to London?"

Some unintelligible reply followed. The large front door was closed, and Montrose's quick, gliding step was heard approaching his library door.

Adelina Valenti clenched her hands and bit her lips. Once before had she done this, in the hour when her lover had deserted her. At the mention of Naples and London the blood had seemed to freeze in her veins and she gasped for breath.

Montrose entered.

He was dressed in his purple cassock, the color of imperial Rome. On his head was the silken, purple biretta. A broad sash with flowing ends was around

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his waist. He looked the part of a middle-aged ecclesiastic whose only thought was for the graver concerns of life.

"How do you do, Mrs. Stoddard?" he said as he entered. "I am delighted to meet you again." Mrs. Stoddard arose and accepted his outstretched hand. As he held her hand for a moment he said: "I have just received a very pleasant call from Lady Ashmead of London. Her family and ours are distantly related. I met her and a party of friends on the Continent last year. It was a pleasure to see her here."

Adelina Valenti sat in a large chair looking at him. Her face was set in strong, hard lines. Her eyes, usually wide open and luminous, were narrowed now, and shone with an unfathomable light. Her waving hair, brushed back from her forehead, brought into relief her chiseled, aquiline features. She seemed to grow in stature. As she bent slightly forward, with arms resting on the chair, her appearance would call to mind a picture of a large eagle poised on some high peak, ready to fly from cloud to cloud.

On entering the room the monsignor's gaze was directed to Mrs. Stoddard, and he had not noticed the person with her. After his words of greeting to Mrs. Stoddard he allowed her hand to drop, and turned to her companion.

He knew her instantly. The color left his face, but his splendid self-possession sustained him. He stepped toward her, held out his hand, and said:

"Ah! a friend of Mrs. Stoddard. Very good of you to come with her."

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Mrs. Stoddard, as though led by force of habit, said,

“Signora Adelina Valenti, Monsignor.”

“I am pleased beyond measure to meet you, I’m sure,” said Montrose. “Why, it was only yesterday that I heard Father Underwood speak of you and your good fortune. It is a pleasure to meet a friend of Mrs. Stoddard, and of my colleague, Father Underwood.”

Signora Valenti did not notice the proffered hand.

“Monsignor Michael Montrose, you and I have met already,” she said.

“Ah, possibly, indeed. I have been over the whole world, and I find it difficult to keep in mind every one whom I have met, as you will readily understand.”

Montrose’s plan, formulated on the instant, was to deny any previous acquaintance with Signora Valenti. She could never prove, he thought, that George Esmond and Monsignor Montrose is the same man. In any case, it was her word against his, and her story would be too improbable to find acceptance anywhere. Besides, she might not be certain that he, Montrose, was Esmond, her former lover. She had seen him as the English gentleman, with beard and clothing in keeping. He is now the Roman Church dignitary, properly accoutered for the position. Let the signora assert, he would deny, and would be the very personification of outraged innocence.

He drew a chair nearer the women and seated himself, talking steadily the while. He passed over the rebuff he had received from Adelina when he had

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extended her his hand. So natural and consistent were his actions that an observer would have thought that nothing unusual was occurring.

“As I was saying,” he went on, “I have met, in the past score of years, many people in different parts of the country. I have an unusually good memory for faces, but names sometimes slip from me. This is unfortunate, as faces change while names do not, except in the case of the fair sex.”

He bowed, as he sat in his chair, and waved his hands gracefully, as though presenting some compliment to his hearers.

Signora Valenti sat motionless, her position still suggesting an eagle ready for flight. Mrs. Stoddard was sitting with head bent, as if yet under the unpleasant influence of the preceding night.

Montrose continued easily: “I was in Alexandria, Egypt, when Lord Wolseley, then Sir Garnet Wolseley, returned to that city from Tel-el-kebir, after his decisive victory over Arabi Pasha. Cardinal Lavigerie’s headquarters were, for the time being, in Alexandria. He was there directing measures for the suppression of slavery in the Soudan. His efforts in that direction made him one of the great figures of the century. In fact, his name is a household word, and the ‘White Fathers,’ a religious order he founded, will perpetuate his work.”

No man could have had a more undemonstrative audience than had the monsignor, but he went on graciously and eloquently:

“The occasion of my presence in Egypt at that time was this: All the world was aroused over the

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horrors of the slave trade in the Soudan. Cardinal Lavigerie and his 'White Fathers' were doing wonders towards its suppression. They needed men and money, especially money. Our bishops in this country had a collection taken in each Church, and the sum total, which was immense, was sent to me by draft. I was then in Rome as special agent for Archbishop Boylston and for several other of our prelates.

"At a meeting of the archbishops a splendid set of resolutions had been adopted, commending Cardinal Lavigerie and his labors. These resolutions were sent to me with the draft. There was also a request from the archbishops that I visit personally Alexandria, and place both draft and resolutions in Cardinal Lavigerie's hand. Of course I was very happy to do this.

"I feel that I am drawing on your patience," he interrupted himself, "but I wish to tell you the sequel. I met General Wolseley and Cardinal Lavigerie. They both were bearded like the pard. Half a dozen years later I attended a reception at the American ambassador's in Paris. Lord Wolseley, such is now his name, was there, and also Cardinal Lavigerie. Wolseley was attired as a general of the British Empire—his dress in Egypt had been rather careless—and only the military mustachios remained of all the hirsute growth on his face.

"The change in the cardinal was yet more marked. The great beard had altogether disappeared, as well as the sheik's bonnet and flowing robe. In dress and face he was a cardinal, and a magnificently

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appearing one. Both Wolseley and Lavigerie recognized me at once, for my face and dress had changed very little. I could not remember that I had ever seen either of them. They enjoyed my embarrassment for a time before solving the riddle for me. I remember this unique incident very distinctly."

The monsignor laughed pleasantly, as though enjoying a joke with friends.

Mrs. Stoddard seemed incapable at that time of stating her errand. Signora Valenti had not changed her position. The same eagle poise was there, but a mocking smile showed on her face. It was not her humor to interrupt the monsignor just yet. She knew that he was playing for time, as well as for position on the field.

The monsignor continued in animated tones, regardless of the unresponsiveness of his hearers.

"Six years ago this very spring I was taken ill in Rome. Malaria, the doctor said. I spent the whole year in Switzerland, visiting Rome not more than once or twice."

Here Signora Valenti interrupted.

"Monsignor Michael Montrose, you have changed in appearance since I last met you. Your friends, the general and the cardinal, have no monopoly of that. Your name has changed as well. In one thing you are the same. You are still a superb liar! Six years ago you spent many months with me in Naples."

Montrose had been awaiting some move from the other side. He countered cleverly.

"Ah," he said to Mrs. Stoddard, "your friend has been ill, very ill. So Underwood told me. I under-

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stand perfectly. You wish to see me about some matter, undoubtedly."

Signora Valenti laughed softly.

"It is true that I have been ill. You wish to imply that I am delirious. Some of my dreams still haunt me! I have been telling one of them to you now. Pleasant thought for you, is it not?"

"Why, my dear lady! Shall I not get you a glass of water, or some cordial? Believe me, I feel for you. My sympathetic heart—"

"Your sympathetic heart! My good Monsignor, it must have changed since that day in Naples."

"'Day in Naples?' Really—"

"Yes, 'day in Naples.' Your memory, is it faulty? Do you wish me to refresh it? I will do so willingly."

"Really, Mrs. Stoddard," turning to that lady, "your friend amazes me. Has she fever still?"

Before Mrs. Stoddard could reply, the signora said:

"You are solicitous! Really, my good sir, you have 'improved with age like good wine.' I can remember when the milk of human kindness was not a part of your constitution."

"Madam, I beg—"

"Then it is your turn to beg, my dear sir. In the years ago in Naples, lying at your feet, struck down by your hand, I begged you not to desert me. Unfeeling and unheeding, you cursed me. In Italy we have a saying which translated reads, 'Curses like chickens come home to roost.'"

"My dear Mrs. Stoddard," the monsignor said, "I leave—"

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"You are an adept in leaving, Monsignor," interrupted Adelina. "and your methods of leaving are sometimes original."

Montrose ignored the speaker, but not the speech. Turning again to Mrs. Stoddard, he said:

"Really, Mrs. Stoddard, courtesy will not allow me to depart—"

The signora laughed mockingly, as she again interrupted:

"In leaving my house in Naples for the last time courtesy did not forbid you to depart, not by the door, but by the window, like a thief and a robber."

Adelina at this point turned to Mrs. Stoddard.

"You signed a paper last night for this man. Is it your wish that it remain in his possession?"

Mrs. Stoddard, thus prompted, said:

"Last evening, while here and in great distress of mind, I placed my name to a paper of some kind. I wish that paper returned to me that I may destroy it."

"Paper, paper," said Montrose in the greatest apparent perplexity, "can it be that I have taken leave of my senses, or that I am dreaming—"

"Neither," interrupted the signora softly and sweetly. "Think for a moment, and perhaps you can remember. I have two attorneys in my employ, and it is a marvel how they can brighten the memory. Perhaps a visit from them would assist you. Is it not so?"

Montrose went on, apparently not listening.

"You perhaps mean the subscription list you signed. We have been endeavoring to raise yet more

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money for the orphanage at Sausalito. I wished to see you last evening on that matter. I think I have that paper somewhere."

Signora Valenti laughed again, as she said:

"Some time ago I thought I was signing certain documents, and later found my name attached to papers of a very different nature. Carbonized paper was beneath the sheet on which I wrote. Such artifices do not stand for a moment before my attorneys, Loeb and Sanderson."

This was exactly what Montrose had done. He had obtained a duplicate signature of Mrs. Stoddard with a carbonized sheet, and had filled in a heading detailing a subscription list for the Sausalito orphanage. He had intended to show this paper to her should she wish to see what she had signed. Now he could not do so.

"As I think of it, I sent that paper out of town this morning by mail. If Mrs. Stoddard does not wish to subscribe I will see that her name is taken off the list."

"It was not a subscription that I signed, but something concerning Father Underwood and—and me."

Montrose lifted up his hands in mock despair.

"Of all the strange experiences—" he began, when Signora Valenti arose and took several steps toward him. The monsignor also arose. It was a striking picture. The slender girl, with every feature strong in determination, faced the stalwart prelate. He was at bay, but would not yield while there was hope of victory. Adelina could not prove, he felt

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sure, that he had been with her in Naples, and she could not know he would go to the archbishop with Mrs. Stoddard's signed statement.

The signora began speaking:

"Monsignor Michael Montrose—or do you prefer to be called George Esmond!—my uncle and cousins once surrounded you with drawn daggers, and I saved you. There are Sicilian daggers in San Francisco. The San Francisco Bay is as deep as the Bay of Naples, and there are fish at the bottom. Will you produce the paper?"

Montrose shrank back in terror. The thought of that night in Naples, when ready hands held the stilettoes over him, was appalling. His self-possession did not leave him, nevertheless, for a moment.

At once his course of action came before him.

"I will prepare a statement, if you wish, saying that I know nothing derogatory to Father Underwood nor to Mrs. Stoddard, but that I know very much that is favorable to them. Will that be satisfactory? I will sign it in your presence."

The women agreed to accept the signed statement, and soon it was in Mrs. Stoddard's hands.

As they left the room Signora Valenti, with an exaggerated curtsy and smile, said: "Good afternoon, Monsignor Michael Montrose. Our present leave-taking is more ceremonious than was the preceding."

When alone in his library, the monsignor rubbed his hands in great satisfaction, and even laughed aloud.

"That Italian fury—how handsome she looked!—

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has none of my old letters, and no proof that Esmond and I are one. I 'm safe on that score. I need have no fears of the vendetta. The statement I signed to-day shows my innocence and good-will. Of course I know nothing derogatory to Underwood nor to the Stoddard woman. Even had anything been told me concerning them, under seal of the confessional, I would be obliged, according to the rules of the Church, to deny all knowledge thereof, even under oath in a court of justice."

The monsignor lay back in his chair and laughed again.

CHAPTER XIX.

Extremes Meet.

SIGNORA VALENTI was not deceived by the apparent sincerity of the monsignor in preparing and signing the paper. There was something unreal in his candor, and she determined to discover the meaning of it all, if possible. She could not divine what the monsignor contemplated, but felt that it must be of great importance, else he would not have risked obtaining Mrs. Stoddard's signature in the way that he had.

On their way home from St. Carmel's parish house the two women had scarcely spoken. Mrs. Stoddard's mind passed aimlessly over the events of the preceding hour, and she seemed incapable of further action. The signora, on the other hand, was alert and ready to enlist her wits in another contest with Monsignor Montrose. She left Mrs. Stoddard at the steps of her home, and asked the chauffeur to hasten to the Jesuit College in Hayes Street.

"I wish to see Father Darsi," she said to the brother porter, and followed him, as he requested, to a waiting-room.

She had leisure, before the father came, to study the room. It was small and scantily furnished. Cheap oilcloth was on the floor. Several engravings of saints were hung about the room.

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"What a contrast to the room in St. Carmel's, which I have just left," thought Adelina. "Perhaps all the reception-rooms here are not so hideous as this. The church is beautiful, and all about the place should be in keeping. It is incomprehensible that visitors should be received in such a room as this."

The door opened noiselessly and an elderly man entered, remaining standing before the girl. He was tall, but bent with the weight of years. The black robe could not conceal the emaciation of his figure, and the few straggling hairs which showed under the rim of his biretta were snowy white. His face would have been a study for a painter. It showed age, and its dark complexion had turned to ashen gray; but it was set in lines that bespoke the master soul within the man. The coal-black eyes, beneath heavy white eyebrows, were the main feature of that striking face. Clear and cool and steady they were; alert and bright as well. A man born to command, one might say.

Adelina had noted carefully the various characteristics of the priest as he had stood for the moment before her, and she knew that he, in turn, was studying her.

"You wish to see me, my child?" he asked, in a deep and singularly pleasant voice. Just a trace of Italian accent touched his words.

"I wish a few moments' conversation with you. At least, I think I shall not ask to keep you long," she replied.

"Very well," he returned, seating himself opposite her.

"You are the superior of all the Jesuits on this

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continent west of the Rocky Mountains, are you not?" she queried.

He nodded assent. His manner was that of one who wished to come to the business in hand at once.

"How strange it is that you, a native of Palermo, should live your life in this far Western country," she continued.

The old man straightened, as she spoke these words.

"Why, what do you know of Palermo?" he asked.

"I was born there, and lived there until the death of my mother. Then I went to live with my uncle in Naples," was the reply.

"What is your uncle's name?" he quickly asked, in Italian.

"Andrea Valenti," was the reply. "He lived many years in Naples, 'for art's sake,' he said." She seemed to drop naturally into the Italian tongue.

"Andrea Valenti!" he echoes. "Andrea and I are half-brothers. Very clever I believe he is, and a very celebrated man. A lover of United Italy, though, as are too many of our people."

"My father was a colonel under Victor Emmanuel, and gave up his life for United Italy," said Adeline.

"I know, I know," said the old man, sadly. "Another brother of ours also followed the fortunes of Garibaldi. He was drowned in a storm on the Mediterranean Sea. I alone, if there should be no other, will follow the ancient faith and traditions of our nation."

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The priest's face glowed with fervor, and his eyes spoke defiance to the enemies of his Church.

"How is it with you, my daughter?" he continued.

"I follow my father," she replied.

"Poor child, poor child! You have never been taught any religion?"

"I have been taught God's providence and the brotherhood of man. I tried to love the Church once, for the love of a man. I have regretted that bitterly."

The old priest looked closely for an instant at Adelina.

"You have the Valenti face," he said. "I doubt not that you have the talents which go with that face. Unless I mistake I have heard of the plaudits of the music-loving multitudes for the diva Valenti. Is it not so?"

As he concluded speaking he arose and said:

"Come with me to my private reception room. It is long since I have spoken with one of my own blood. It cheers my spirit, even though that relative is a child of United Italy. Come with me."

Adelina followed him through a long, dark hall; then up a broad, well-lighted stairway, into a large room fitted up as library and study.

The walls were partly hidden by bookcases which contained the great works of Roman Catholic philosophers and theologians. "Opera S. Thoma," "Opera Suarezii," "Opera Lugonis," and so forth, followed one after another. The windows of the room were of stained glass, and the walls were frescoed in exquisite design.

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The girl and the religious sat in the subdued light, looking one at the other. They were representatives of different generations, and of different ideals.

Adelina was the first to break the silence.

"May I ask by whose hand these pictures were painted? I do not recognize the school."

"They were painted by members of our Order. They follow no particular school, each developing his talent as time permits. The stained glass here was prepared in our college laboratory, and these walls were frescoed by one of our lay brothers."

Signora Valenti gave a start of surprise.

"Who would have thought—" she began, but interrupted herself.

The old priest laughed heartily.

"Who would have expected to find such talent in a dreary monastery, you would say. Well, this is not a monastery, and we who love its seclusion and opportunities do not find it dreary."

Father Darsi laughed again, and Adelina joined him.

"Come, come!" said he, "I am forgetting Sicilian hospitality."

He touched an electric button, and a lay brother quickly entered the room. The man looked wonderingly at Adelina, but was under too strict discipline to express surprise. He made a low obeisance to the priest and stood awaiting his orders.

"Bring fruit, cake, and wine at once," was the command given him. He departed as quickly as he came. Evidently the superior general demanded from his subordinates exact and instant obedience.

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The wine and viands were soon in evidence. Father Darsi poured out a small glass of wine for Adelina, and another for himself. He passed her some delicate amber grapes, then taking a few for his own use.

"This wine," he said, "is from our vineyards at San Geronimo, near San Jose. I can recommend it to you. Even Sicily bears none better. These grapes are hothouse grapes, as you may well imagine, and are grown here in San Francisco, in our own courtyard."

The Italian girl accepted the proffered hospitality, awaiting an opportunity to gain the information she desired. The priest wished to speak more of the homeland and of their relatives.

"Andrea Valenti still lives?" he inquired.

"Yes," was the reply. "He is still in Naples and devoted to his art."

"When were you last in Naples?" continued the priest.

"Six years ago," replied Adelina. She then turned the subject by becoming the questioner herself.

"How long since you have seen Italy, Father Darsi?"

"It is well-nigh forty years," was the reply.

"Since then you have lived in many parts of the world?" she asked.

"Many," was the reply. "I have been a missionary in the Zambesi-River district in Africa, and the director of an astronomical observatory in Cape Town. For ten years I was on the mission fields in Brazil and China; and for twenty years I have been here."

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"You have added to the artistic nature, which is common to the family, a devotion to the exact sciences, I understand," she remarked.

"Yes. When I was a young man in Rome my philosophical speculations took a turn which was alarming to my superiors. I was ordered to let philosophy alone, and to study mathematics. I did so, and gained great love and admiration for the mathematical sciences. My knowledge of these sciences I used to advantage in Cape Town, and also in our college here. My philosophical aberrations long ago ceased to disturb the Roman authorities."

"I have heard my uncle speak of your book, 'Molecular Mechanics.' Have you done anything further with those theories?" asked Adelina.

"You do well to speak of 'theories.' I have not touched those matters for years."

"At a company of savants in Paris my uncle heard your book spoken of as a brilliant contribution to science," said Adelina.

"It was a brilliant failure, perhaps, and could not be more," returned the priest.

These two, the priest and girl, were chatting like old friends. They sipped their wine and ate grapes as if the meeting was one of the common circumstances of their lives.

Adelina felt that some regulation of the Church was involved in the paper which Montrose had induced Mrs. Stoddard to sign. She wished to obtain from Father Darsi, if possible, an expression as to what he might think could be the nature of such a paper; also, as to the use which the monsignor might

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make of the document. She felt that Father Darsi would not knowingly say anything which would militate against Church discipline; hence, she felt the need of caution in broaching the subject to him.

"I have met two other priests in San Francisco," she remarked. "Perhaps you are acquainted with Father Underwood."

"I am, indeed," was the reply. "He has come here a number of times to debate with me on matters of Church doctrine and practice. A fine man, a very fine man. He is much taken up with the new studies which are in vogue. Very good and very useful they are when properly managed. If I was thirty years younger I, too, would take them up in earnest. I have not time now—I have not time."

"Does the Church need anything new? I thought all was arranged and settled centuries ago," said Adelina.

"Nothing new in substance; new only in the manner of expression and development. Danger might come from misunderstanding this."

"I am not conversant with those matters," said the other. "But, tell me, does this in any way appertain to the discipline of the Church? Are there any changes in that?"

"Certainly not," was the reply. "Holy Church is always the same, and punishes offenders against her law, with justice and mercy, as ever."

Adelina had been brought up in the teachings of New Italy. The last words of the good father grated on her, but she did not show her displeasure.

Adelina confided in the priest the story of her life

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in Naples with Montrose, suppressing all names. Father Darsi listened with close attention. When she had finished he began to speak of Judas as a member of the twelve apostles, and so forth, when Adelina broke in with:

“How is such a man to be punished? I mean what means has your Church—the Church—to punish such an offender?”

“He would be deposed from the priesthood, if apprehended. In the old days—” The priest stopped speaking suddenly, but his face showed that he would wish to hand such a man over to the Inquisition.

“You speak of apprehension. How could such a person be detected and punished?” asked Signora Valenti.

“God’s vengeance ever follows the persistent wrong-doer,” said Father Darsi.

“I mean in the concrete,” said the other. “How could the Church detect such a villain?”

“God’s vengeance follows the persistent wrong-doer,” repeated the priest, “and it can take concrete form in various ways. Of course, in such a weighty matter the religious superior or bishop must have indisputable proof of guilt before proceeding to extreme punishment.”

“What would you consider indisputable proof?” asked Adelina.

“The most convincing proof I know of is that given by a burdened soul under the seal of the confessional, when the heart speaks its truth to God.”

“But this is secret. How could the superior be made cognizant of it?”

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The priest went on:

"Secret it is, absolutely so. In a case of this kind the injured woman, after telling her sad story to her confessor, would be compelled, by the discipline of the Church, to prepare a written statement, giving the priest's name and telling of his sinful wishes. The paper then must be given to the bishop or religious superior. This is the manner of procedure which always must be followed in such cases."

"Such evidence would be considered strong?" she asked.

"Very strong, indeed," was the reply.

"Would a third party be necessary to sign the statement, as a witness?" she asked.

"That, while not absolutely necessary, would materially strengthen the evidence," said Father Darsi.

Light now showed around the puzzling situation. There was one question more that Adelina wished to ask.

"Would the confessor who was instrumental in procuring the incriminating statement be bound as to the contents, under seal of the confessional?" she queried.

"Absolutely bound," was the reply. "It would be as if he knew nothing against either party mentioned in the statement."

It was now plain to the signora. Montrose had entrapped Mrs. Stoddard into signing a paper incriminating Father Underwood at least. Perhaps, too, Mrs. Stoddard herself was included in the charge. What it all meant she could not divine. Undoubtedly the statement even now was in the hands of the arch-

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bishop. Montrose could well sign the document which he had given Mrs. Stoddard. What further knowledge he possessed, he could say was under seal of the confessional, and was as if it did not exist. Montrose wished to work some great injury to Father Underwood. There could be no doubt of it.

"Father Darsi," said Signora Valenti, "I thank you for your hospitality, and the information you have given me."

"Ah, yes, I am getting somewhat garrulous, I fear. I have spoken to you of matters of which you rarely hear from a priest. You would better forget it all. I shall be more careful in the future."

"Nevertheless, I thank you, Father Darsi. I am glad to meet my father's brother, even though we differ in religious belief. I had an ill opinion of your Church, but I believe that further acquaintance with you would help to dissipate that opinion, somewhat at least. My acquaintance with Father Underwood already has had that tendency."

They parted cordially, the girl exacting a promise from her relative that he would soon call on her at her apartments in the St. Francis.

CHAPTER XX.

The Philosophy of Philosophy.

WHILE the various events were taking place which vitally affected Father Underwood, he was busily engaged in formulating plans which he would follow when his intellectual and spiritual difficulties were solved. It might be said that these difficulties were already solved, and that it was the application of his deductions to his everyday life which was now the real problem.

After a storm has ceased the clouds do not always clear away immediately, but here and there the heavens remain obscured for a time. It was so in Underwood's life. He knew that there was light, and knew in which direction the light lay, for he had seen it when the skyline of his soul vision was clear. Doubts dark and troublesome at times beset him, but he felt that he was approaching the safe harbor of peace.

The archbishop had said nothing to Underwood of the letter placed in his Grace's hands by Montrose. Father Underwood had seen neither Mrs. Stoddard nor Signora Valenti since their interview with the monsignor. There was nothing to distract him from his main purpose of setting his life aright with God in the light of his newer and deeper convictions.

Underwood had been perfectly frank in conversa-

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tions with the archbishop, Father Tower, and the Jesuit Darsi. Of these, only the last, perhaps, grasped the real meaning of Underwood's position, and even the Jesuit thought it could be reconciled with Catholic doctrine, tradition, and spirit. New light on old truths made even these truths appear new, whereas they were not, he reasoned. The re-statement of a truth changed only its outward garb, not its substance. Additional demonstrations were valuable, even though not absolutely necessary. As for the sanctuary of the soul, where God comes with the glory of His presence, had not the great Augustine, of Hippo, declared this to be holy ground? Ignatius, of Loyola, too, the greatest modern master of spiritual life, would allow no sacrilegious hand to be placed on the sacred bond which united the soul of man and the Spirit of God. Man thus hears truths which his tongue may not have the power to utter, but which he can not doubt.

There are the higher and the lower forms of truth, or perhaps better yet, the same truths are at times differently conceived and differently expressed. The old Jesuit was keen in his thoughts, rather than logical in ordering his life thereby. Few men, perhaps, are logical in thus ordering their lives, but Underwood was destined by nature to be one of the few.

Father Darsi was not well versed in the modern higher critical method of studying Scripture and history. Had he so been, it is not likely that his faith in the traditional beliefs of his Church would have been shaken. Had the conclusions of the higher critics been subversive of dogma, he would have attributed

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such a condition to an imperfect understanding on his own part either of the dogma itself or of the truth established by the critical method.

Fealty to his Church was a matter of principle with Father Darsi. In his youth, while his brothers and his friends entered the alliance of "a free Church in a free State," he renounced the world and became a Jesuit novice. He devoted the years of his early manhood to the study of the magnificent classics in prose and verse of his native land. As time sped on, all Italy began to ring with plaudits for the contributions to literature made by the Sicilian Jesuit. Later he essayed to prove that Dante's poetry gave a deeper and a truer demonstration of the spirit of the Church than did the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas.

His religious superiors took alarm, and Darsi was ordered to give up his literary and philosophical studies and devote himself to the exact sciences. He submitted, though the struggle in his own heart must have been a bitter one.

Darsi was commanded to prepare himself for the chair of mathematics in a Jesuit college in Paris. The task was not pleasant for him at that time, but the wish of the Church was his law, so he bent all the energies of his mind to perfecting himself in the branch to which he had been assigned.

A few years later he published his work on "Molecular Mechanics." Professor de Morgan, the eminent English mathematician, welcomed Darsi as a new and a powerful light in the scientific world. The various organizations devoted to the exact sciences

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gave him a royal welcome. Before the British Mathematical Society he delivered a lecture on "The Philosophy of Mathematics." Some note in it alarmed again his religious superiors, and almost immediately he was ordered to a Jesuit astronomical observatory in South Africa. Thence he was sent to the desolate missionary fields above the Zambesi River, then returned to the observatory as its director, ordered later to Brazil, then again to China, for missionary work. Finally San Francisco became his halting place.

When questioned about his abandoned or interrupted studies, or of the wandering life he had been compelled to lead, he would answer: "My one wish is the glory of God and the welfare of Holy Church. I count the surrender of my own will as nothing if I may serve them both."

In San Francisco Father Darsi again had been placed at the professor's desk. He again took up the round of mathematical studies, if indeed he had ever entirely laid it down. He pushed toward completion his monumental work on "The Cycloid."

The venerable Professor Esse, of Berkeley, wrote a criticism of the work for the *Scientific American*. The professor stated that when he was, many years before, professor of differential and integral calculus at Bonne, in Germany, the learned world in Europe had been startled by the appearance of a brilliant work on "Molecular Mechanics," written by Father Darsi, a professor in a Jesuit college in Paris. The savants eagerly awaited the publication of the sequel to this great book, which was science twenty-

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five years ahead of the time. No sequel appeared, and Father Darsi was lost sight of.

Now comes another work from the same pen. Science again, and also again twenty-five years ahead of the time. The fertile brain of Darsi has done for the cycloidal curve all that has been done for the circle in trigonometry. By substitution, integrations will be easily carried out which would be most difficult or even impossible in the former system.

It is now Professor Darsi's duty, his bounden duty, to bring his epoch-making work to completion, and to give to that lever of mathematics, integral calculus, an immensely increased advantage, and so forth, and so forth.

The work of the Jesuits west of the Rocky Mountains had hitherto been carried on by several bodies of men acting independently and reporting to the superior general of the Jesuits in Rome. It was deemed expedient to consolidate all the territory from the northern boundary of Alaska to the Mexican line, and from the Pacific Ocean to the Rockies, into one great mission. Father Darsi was given the distinguished honor of presiding over this great empire. His headquarters were in San Francisco; but his duties, being numerous, led him far afield.

The distinguished scientist was importuned to complete his great work on the cycloid. He simply had not time to do so. The Smithsonian Institution offered to publish the book when written, to guarantee him a bonus, to do anything in reason, if he would conclude what he had so auspiciously begun. But his duties from the Yukon to San Diego, from

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Helena to El Paso, would not permit him. Ever obedient to his superiors, he turned his active and resourceful mind from scholarly pursuits to instituting methods and to governing men. He succeeded admirably in both.

The influence of the Jesuit Order in his territory went forward by leaps and bounds. In San Francisco itself, despite the immense prestige given the archbishop by his position as ruler by divine right, Father Darsi was unquestionably a greater figure in the Catholic world than was Archbishop Boylston.

Darsi's Jesuit superiors had feared that his mind would be deflected from Catholic truth should he pursue certain philosophical premises to their conclusion. It would not have been so; for, were his conclusions adverse to Catholic faith, he would have said, "So much the worse for the conclusions." So would it have been with facts or anything else that did not concur with his religious acceptance. He would have undoubtedly said, "So much the worse for the facts," at least, in effect.

His writings on the forbidden subjects might have upset the simple, trusting faith in some others. So his superiors feared, but this he could not understand; but, as always, the will of his superior was to him the voice of God, and he unquestioningly obeyed.

To this man, so learned, so heroic, and so childlike, Underwood came to speak of his own difficulties and their inevitable solution.

Early one afternoon Darsi and his friend were together in the former's study. On the desk before

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the Jesuit was a large crucifix. The cross was of heavy ebony, and the figure of the dying Christ was carved in silver.

"Ah, Father Darsi," said Underwood, "some new wonder. Carved by Brother Mettina, of course."

"He carved the Figure. The cross was made in Cape Town more than thirty years ago, and I have had it with me ever since. The silver in the Figure was taken from one of the mines in Mexico and was presented to me my last visit there."

"I suppose there is some history connected with the cross, since you have kept it so long," said Underwood.

"Hardly history," said the Jesuit, musingly. "While I was director of the astronomical observatory in Cape Town, news came to me of my brother Leopold's promotion to the command of a division in Garibaldi's army. Leopold had abandoned the Church in his youth, and had risen early to distinction in that band of despoilers, who forgot their mother, the Church, in their zeal for national welfare, so called.

"When I heard of my brother's promotion from brigadier to lieutenant-general in that impious band. I prayed for guidance, that I might in some way touch his heart. The thought of the crucifix came to me. Perhaps the sight of the dying Savior on the cross would touch the hardened sinner. I had the ebony prepared and was thinking over some designs for the figure of the Crucified One, when dispatches brought word of a terrible storm on the Mediterranean, and of the wrecking of a number of transports

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on which was a division of the Garibaldian army. General Darsi was among the lost."

Underwood was silent. It did not seem opportune to speak.

After a moment's pause the Jesuit went on:

"I like your Cardinal Newman in many ways. I like his power of grasping abstract principles and placing them plainly before the reader. His doctrine of consciousness is identical with that of St. Augustine and of Dante, though the latter is a poet, not a theologian.

"Consciousness goes higher and deeper and farther than most men suppose. Had I the time I could prove—what am I saying? Do I not know that it is better to serve God by obedience than to follow one's own will, which often is a will-o'-the-wisp?"

The old man's form had straightened in his chair as he spoke, and his eyes sparkled with the keenest intelligence. Then the lifetime habit of exact obedience overcame him and he relapsed into his former mood.

"I was saying that I like Newman, your English cardinal. He was logical in his devotion to the Church. When his brother, Francis Newman, refused to consider the claims of the true faith, the cardinal denied him all further brotherly and Christian offices; and quite right, I say."

"Really, Father Darsi," said Underwood, "I admire Newman's writings very greatly and accept his teachings on consciousness, but I can not agree with you in regard to his treatment of his brother Francis. The cardinal had the perception of a Greek for

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beauty, and the spiritual vision of a Jewish seer. These qualities led him into the Catholic Church, though not logically, I hold.

"Francis Newman far surpassed his brother in the logical and metaphysical faculties of the mind, while he lacked in the distinctively spiritual powers. From his viewpoint the cardinal's position was an impossible one, logically considered.

"The two men started from different points, traversed different paths, and reached contrary conclusions. I disagree utterly with Francis Newman's premises and consequent conclusions, yet I believe that he was more logical than his brother."

"Then you think that the cardinal was wrong in refusing his agnostic brother all Christian and brotherly friendship?" asked the Jesuit.

"Most assuredly I do," returned Underwood.

The Jesuit paused for a moment, then said:

"Since the death of my brother, General Darsi, until this moment I have never breathed a single prayer for the repose of his soul. Therefore you know what I think of his eternal destiny. I believe that he rejected salvation willfully. How can I be more merciful than God? So thought Newman, and so think I."

"How can finite man judge the infinite mercy of God? How can you judge that your brother has gone his way to everlasting ruin?" remonstrated Underwood.

"Holy Scripture tells us of Judas Iscariot that it was better he had never been born, referring assuredly to the loss of his immortal soul," was the reply.

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“Referring, perhaps, to the enormity of his treason. Better never to have been born than to be born and become a traitor,” argued Underwood.

“But the ancient tradition of the Church!” exclaimed Darsi.

“This ancient tradition, when viewed in the light of higher historical criticism, is often self-contradictory on eternal punishment, as well as on many other matters,” Underwood maintained.

“The voice of the Church, using the tongue of the sovereign pontiff, is infallible,” objected the Jesuit.

“Well said!” agreed Underwood. “I agree with you perfectly. But is not this voice of the Church the echo of the universal religious conscience of Christendom? If so, the usual teaching of the infallibility of the pope must be materially altered.”

Father Darsi did not reply for a moment. Then he said:

“If I had been allowed time I would have showed that underlying philosophy itself, and poetry, and every exact science as well, there is a yet deeper and grander philosophy. In the light of this philosophy the teachings of the Church would have been given a new and greater meaning. Who knows but that you, from the side of higher historical criticism, and I, from the philosophy of philosophy, would have touched the same point, though from different directions?”

Underwood did not speak. He was awaiting further light from his friend. Father Darsi was not disposed to continue further in this vein.

“What have I been saying?” said he. “Harping

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again on the old string. Speaking of the dreams of my young manhood—all bubbles, all clouds without water. My superiors have ordered my life wisely, and God has blessed their prudence unto His honor and glory. His will be done.”

Underwood now spoke of the crucifix on the desk.

“You intended,” said he, “to present your brother, General Darsi, with an emblem similar to this. Is there some one else you have in mind whom you wish to influence?”

“Yes,” replied the Jesuit. “My half-brother, Giovanni Valenti, left a daughter, Adelina. She is a pagan, as her father was. He lost his life under the banner of Victor Emmanuel. Much to my surprise I received a visit from her very lately. I did not know that she was in this part of the world. I have had the crucifix prepared, intending to present it to her when I call on her. I shall attach all the indulgences to the crucifix which our Order is privileged to give, and I shall pray the Savior that He enlighten her darkened eyes to the claims of the one true Church.”

“I have met Signora Valenti,” said Underwood, “but did not know that she is a relative of yours.”

“She mentioned meeting you, and, no doubt, has been benefited by the acquaintance,” replied Darsi.

“I do not think that she will be attracted by the religious meaning of the crucifix,” the younger man went on. “Its artistic side only will appeal to her, I believe. For myself, I do not like the great emphasis placed on the crucifix in our Churches. The Christ died, to be sure, but only after He had lived,

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and had preached the truest and most beautiful doctrines the world has ever known. Not only that, but in His lifetime He gave impetus to the movement which has spread over the whole world, revolutionizing it, and building the newer and more splendid civilization which is ours. Christ did this by His life, not by His death. Therefore I would like to see the strong man portrayed, the Christ of the Sermon on the Mount, the Christ who silenced the carping, hypocritical Pharisees; not, at least not alone, the Christ who was physically overcome by superior brute strength and given shameful death by crucifixion."

The Jesuit was aghast at such thoughts.

"Do you not know," asked he, "that the Church has defined the dogma, 'Christ died for the elect?'"

"I am aware of the definition," was the reply; "also of the various interpretations which theologians have placed on it. For myself, I hold it to be partly symbolic. I feel assured, too, that the universal Christian conscience would bear me out in this."

"It is well," replied Father Darsi, "that you are talking with me on these subjects. The majority of Catholics would hold you to be heretical. I do not, because I know your heart is right, even if your words sound strange."

"I may be heretical to the interpretations which many theologians have placed on Christ's teachings, but I feel that I am in accordance with the true Church of Christ," was the reply.

"Well said; well said!" the Jesuit exclaimed. "Now, how is the true Church of Christ to be determined?"

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"In this way. The Spirit of God enlightens the soul of men. By that light we see certain fundamental religious and moral truths. All men who are similarly enlightened know these truths. There is then a consensus of opinion in regard to them. This makes the body of doctrine which is committed to the Church that is composed of the men thus enlightened. The office of the pope is to declare the universal consensus of opinion on any doctrine. He is then the mouthpiece of this body of believing men, whom we call the Church."

"You then believe that all doctrine comes through the religious sense of the individual, then into a common aggregate by the consensus of the many?" queried Darsi.

"My idea, exactly," replied Underwood.

"I repeat that it is well that you are speaking to me, who knows so well your earnestness in demonstrating the foundations of belief. I believe that your conclusions are wrong, but I sympathize with the sincerity of your endeavor."

"You know, of course, what Augustine, of Hippo, and your own Ignatius, of Loyola, hold on consciousness?" queried Underwood.

"From them I received my fundamental ideas on the philosophy of philosophy," returned Darsi. "But what am I saying? All those hopes are buried at the behest of holy obedience, and must not be resurrected."

Darsi paused a little, and then spoke with much feeling:

"Underwood, probe as deep as you wish, and

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speculate as your dreams may lead you, but do not allow anything to swerve you from the strictest allegiance to the wishes of the Vicar of Christ in Rome. Long ago I surrendered my will to him, and my intellect to his judgment. Let him declare dogmatically that black is white, and I will accept it without question. Let him thus declare what he will, and I will believe him.

“I merge my understanding, my will, my senses in him who stands in Christ’s place; and I honor God by my complete surrender. The Vicar of Christ is responsible for my actions, not I. If his commands are just, the glory is God’s. If unjust, the stigma is on the superior who commands, not on the one who obeys.”

Father Underwood did not enter further into discussion with the Jesuit. He knew that it would be futile. He bade the older man adieu, and passed out of the house into the street. He felt that he could not again enter into these subjects, which were so near to his heart, with Father Darsi. The Jesuit could not and would not follow the path which he himself had already entered and which he would traverse to the end.

CHAPTER XXI.

Higher Criticism.

MONSIGNOR MONTROSE seldom appeared now at the refectory table in St. Carmel's parish house. Immediately following his return from abroad he had taken the opportunity afforded by the meal hours to meet the several priests of the parish and cultivate their friendship. Gradually he had withdrawn from their fellowship at the common table, as well as elsewhere. When he was at home, which was little of late, his meals were usually served in the library by the servant Maria.

The monsignor's dream of ruling in San Francisco over spiritual and temporal affairs was vanishing, and the awakening was unpleasant. Alluring hopes and ambitions so easy of seeming realization when viewed from a distance, in closer touch showed no favor to Montrose. The earnest and devoted priests who lived in St. Carmel's house were conundrums to him. He despised the routine of their lives, the people whom they so earnestly served, and he knew nothing of or had forgotten the spirit which sustained and directed them in their work.

He was now awaiting the action of the archbishop against Underwood. Why was his Grace so unconscionably slow in the matter? Usually with the arch-

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bishop to think was to do. Several days had passed by and Father Underwood had gone about his work as usual, and had seemed in his ordinary spirits. The servant Maria had so reported to the monsignor. He himself was keeping aloof from St. Carmel's, that he might be out of sight when the storm burst.

Montrose had a vivid remembrance of Underwood's indignation and stinging words the night that his dog Rover had been ill-used. The monsignor was physically brave, but he became a moral coward when he thought of coming face to face with the man against whom he meditated such evil. Accordingly he had taken rooms at the St. Mark in Oakland, telling the archbishop that he had some pressing literary work which he must do, and that he required security from interruption. He had left word at St. Carmel's parish house that he was to be out of town.

The monsignor's restless mind was not busy over literary work. As soon as Underwood was disposed of he intended visiting the great capitals of South America. Mexico City, as well, deserved attention. He believed that through the archbishop the apostolic delegate could be induced to make him special papal commissioner for that whole region. Several years might be spent there divertingly. He procured a great mass of literature on Central and South America, and was carefully going over it in his rooms at the St. Mark. Already he had his routing prepared.

When sufficient time had passed he would leave the Southern countries and return to Europe. Perhaps his work as papal commissioner would win renown for him in Rome. In any case he could re-

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visit on the Continent the old scenes of pleasure, and would find new companions there. Those who may have suspected his identity in the old days would be elsewhere by that time.

Montrose craved power over men, and the respect which comes to those alone who love justice and do right. His position in the Church he had guarded, in order that he might acquire that power and gain that respect. He knew that the loss of his position would mean irretrievable ruin; yet he played the game of pleasure, staking the only means to honor that he possessed, as the degenerate at Monte Carlo plays his last *louis d'or*, though he may face starvation on the morrow.

The monsignor had taken care that physical want, at least, would never overtake him. A part of a large bequest to St. Carmel's Church had come to him personally, and by judicious investments he had added materially to this considerable sum.

Underwood's spirit was in sharp contrast to that of Montrose. He was seeking, not wealth nor personal aggrandizement, but the highest good. He wished to live a life close to God and for the sake of his fellow-men. He longed to realize in his soul the model which is Christ, to mold his own personality on that of Christ.

For years he had sought through the dogmas and teachings of the Church to discover the help and enlightenment that he needed. Finally the thought came to him that he must seek direct access to God through Jesus Christ if he would receive perfect enlightenment. Struggling with this thought, he seemed

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to see that the Old and New Testaments were records of the communings of men's souls with God, and that the dogmas of the Church were the theological expressions of the religious experiences with which spiritual men had been gifted.

He began a systematic study of the Scriptures in the light of higher criticism. Later he searched Church history through and through on the same thorough plan. Gradually it became plain to him that his view of the Scriptures was the true one. The theory of the inspiration of Holy Writ was then simple and easy. He struggled long to find some basis on which the development of Church doctrine might rest. There were the creeds and, later, the definitions following each other through the ages. That these creeds and definitions were expressions of religious experiences seemed to be a reasonable thought. There was a difficulty in reconciling them with the teachings of the New Testament.

It was not until that stormy day on the summit of Point Lobos hill that he saw the true significance of it all. It there became plain to him that the creeds and doctrines of the Church, being statements of the spiritual experiences of men, as such they must be subjected to symbolic interpretation if we would know their true meaning. His own religious experiences, when translated into words, symbolized the same eternal truths that did dogmas and defined teachings. He had left Point Lobos as Moses must have left Sinai, with his soul exalted.

There still remained one problem for solution. Would his Church allow him to interpret her teach-

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ings in a symbolic sense? If the Church would refuse to allow her dogmas to be symbolically interpreted, Underwood knew that he had no right within her pale. The standard works on Catholic theology gave Underwood no key to the solution of his present difficulty. Symbolic interpretation seemed a new one. The archbishop thought that no harm could come from such a consideration of the teachings of the Church.

Father Darsi, with all his cleverness, seemed unable to look the question in the face. At the first glimpse of the light of the deeper truths he seemed to close his eyes and take refuge under the safe shield of ecclesiastical obedience.

Father Tower admitted that he was unable to meet the difficulties fairly. He knew that the Roman authorities were watching closely the new trend of theological thought, and that many well-informed men in the sacred city believed that a severe condemnation of certain modern methods and results would soon be forthcoming. He could not decide, of course, whether Underwood's specific contentions would be condemned or approved.

The day following Underwood's visit to the Jesuit found him once again in the study of Father Tower. The gray-haired priest was in a somewhat militant mood to-day. For years he had restrained undesirable institutions from entering the bounds of his parish. Now the nickelodeons were being opened everywhere around him, and he knew that many of the moving pictures shown were evil in suggestion. He remonstrated with the officials who issued licenses to the

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amusement companies. Little satisfaction was given him at first. The amusement companies evidently had strong friends in high quarters.

Father Tower finally heard of a nickelodeon which was giving openly exhibitions which were absolutely immoral. He entered the place and saw there moving pictures which were a violation of the moral code. He promptly placed the manager of the nickelodeon under arrest, and with his own hand led him to the police station. There he swore to a complaint against him, and to another complaint against the company that he represented.

All this had occurred that very morning, just before Underwood's visit.

The two men, after the customary greeting, seated themselves, as was their wont, on opposite sides of Father Tower's study. The latter related the occurrences of the morning.

"You are like Cyril, of Alexandria," said Underwood. "You rule your city with a strong hand and an outstretched arm."

"My end of the city needs such treatment," was the reply.

The conversation soon drifted into the usual channel of Church apologetics.

"I can not agree with you," Father Underwood said, "that there is any distinction between the natural and supernatural. Between the material and the spiritual, or immaterial, there is a difference."

"Then you believe that the natural and the supernatural are one?" queried Tower.

"God is not, in my opinion, some absentee power

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which runs the universe as a piece of high gearing," was the reply. "God is everywhere, in the natural world and in the high heaven. This world is as supernatural as it is natural, as natural as it is supernatural. There is not one law for the world and another for heaven. Law is universal and obtains everywhere. There is the natural law in the spiritual world, as Henry Drummond saw; and men with clearer spiritual vision than even he possessed perceived it and described it more completely than did he."

"What do you mean by spirituality?" asked Tower. "Is it not some form of other-worldness?"

"Not at all," returned Underwood. "Spirituality for man is altogether of this world. To consider it otherwise is to separate spirituality and morality."

"How can you show this?" protested Tower, as he saw the strongholds of his faith assailed.

"I can show it very easily," responded Underwood. "Spirituality has been mistaken both for orthodoxy and ecstacy. It is neither. The Pharisees were orthodox, yet unspiritual. The pagan priests, in the midst of their evil rites even, are ecstatic. Read the travels of Hue and Gabet, and you will see this."

"What then do you mean by spirituality?" again queried Tower.

"Spirituality is the living forth in this world of the Spirit of God. Christ is the embodiment of all the attributes of God, in so far as the infinite can find place in finite limits, and in so far as the eternal can be expressed in the terms of time. Christ lived forth the Spirit of God, the Father, as has no man done

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before nor since His time; and the divine Christ, whom we know through faith, is the result of that life. He is the truly Spiritual Man, the great Exemplar of all spirituality.

“We who ask receive this life of God, through Christ. Call it grace, or power, or what you will, it matters not. If we live the life that God’s Spirit enables us to live, then are we spiritual. There may be no ecstasy in our lives; those lives may be plain and humdrum, yet highly spiritual.”

“But the acceptance of dogmas and definitions,” continued Tower. “Surely these have a place in spirituality.”

“Men who have spiritual gifts discern things spiritually. Their expression of what they thus see forms the substance of all dogmas and definitions. Thus, dogmas and definitions are the results of spiritual experiences, not the cause of them. Dogmatic teaching symbolizes the religious experiences of others.”

“That sounds like something new,” said Father Tower, “still it may be the true theory of the evolution of dogma. How does your new apologetic serve you? Was not the former theory good enough?”

Underwood waited a moment before speaking. Then he began:

“The new theory, as you call it, serves me in this way: It places me directly in touch with the Spirit of God. That is the privilege of every man. It matters not to me what others may have heard while in that close communion. They have received what their needs require. My own needs may differ from theirs, as I differ from them in peculiar constitution of soul

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and mind. The gifts which I receive from God are therefore suited to me. I interpret my experiences with what grace and light of mind that I have. This is the material from which dogma is made. Only through symbolic interpretation has it meaning. It may have one signification for you and another for me, according to our own knowledge."

"That seems reasonable," replied Tower, "but how does higher criticism regard this?"

"In this way," was the reply. "We follow back step by step through the ages, to the very fount of Christianity; and there we find this theory exemplified to the fullest. It is like tracing a river from the broad expanse near the sea back to the spring in the mountains from which it takes its initial existence. It is made up of many streams, but has only one primal source. So it is with Christian doctrine. It began pure and undefiled, but many streams flowed into it through the ages. It is the old question of separating the wheat from the chaff. Higher criticism does this, by using the critical principles and determining what is worthy of credence and what is not. When all has been sought out and sifted we discover how Christian consciousness has been developing doctrines as the ages went on."

"Very well," said Tower, "but how can you prove the existence of this Christian consciousness?"

"It needs no demonstration, any more than does the knowledge of one's free will, nor of one's own existence. We feel, we know, we possess, and we doubt not these things. So it is with consciousness, and also so it is with Christian or religious consciousness."

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"You have then arrived at the conclusion that the inner consciousness is the true guide in matters of religion. How are you to utilize this?" queried Tower.

"I wish to apply it to the doctrines that we are teaching in our Churches. I shall apply it to the ordering of my own life. I feel that my conclusions are God-given, and I must not refuse to incorporate them into my life," replied Underwood.

"But the Church, my good friend?" epostulated Tower.

"Let the Church speak and declare herself on these matters," returned Underwood.

"If she condemns the conclusions which you have deduced from higher criticism, what then?" pursued Tower.

"God's will be done," said the other. "I do not feel myself free to accept other than that which God gives me to know. Neither am I free to be silent when truths of manifest importance come to my consciousness. I shall act and speak as my conscience directs. If I am not permitted to do so where I am, I have still my duty toward God, and that duty I mean to discharge, come what may."

"Spoken well!" said Tower. "I have already talked with you of the ominous preparations in Rome regarding the treatment of some new doctrines. I do not know how yours will fare. I respect your sincerity in these matters, though I can not agree with, nor even follow, your conclusions."

"Life provides an individual path for every one, yet each path leads to the same goal," were Underwood's parting words.

CHAPTER XXII.

A Rose Carnival.

FOR many years it had been the custom of Mrs. Harry Darlington to give, the first day of May, on the grounds surrounding her magnificent residence in Piedmont, a rose fête and bazaar, the proceeds of which were divided among various charities in the bay towns. This May-day festival was always anxiously looked forward to by many.

This year the full of the moon happened to be near the first day of May; and, as the weather was warm, Mrs. Darlington had arranged attractions which lasted from two o'clock in the afternoon till late in the evening.

A battle of roses, which was a new feature, took place at three o'clock. Many bushels of roses of all colors had been gathered in preparation for the event. One side of the army was stationed on a balcony facing the east, while the opponents were on the lawn below. It was a beautiful and unique sight, and caused much merriment. Some Eastern visitors who happened to be present marveled at the prodigality of blossoms.

"Why," said one, "back East they will hardly believe me when I tell them about this."

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"I agree with you," said her friend. "Why, I have never seen so many roses in my whole life as I have seen this afternoon."

Laughter and happiness were the order of the day. The visitors moved about greeting friends and acquaintances, many of whom had scarcely met since the celebration a year ago.

Father Underwood was an annual visitor, and he was there as usual on this occasion.

Miss van Allston was also among those present, this being her first visit.

Later in the afternoon these two were standing near each other watching the antics of the children who were riding on the pony carts. Mrs. Darlington approached them, having with her a Mr. Wendell. After introducing the gentleman the hostess invited all three to join her in refreshments at a small table which was standing at a little distance under a blossoming orange tree. They accepted, and soon were served with dainty sandwiches and fragrant tea. A stringed orchestra was playing not far away.

"How strange life is!" observed Mr. Wendell. "It is full of contrasts. Last year, this very day, I was in the wilds of Siberia, far from habitation, engineering a new spur of the Trans-Siberian Railway, and we were working like beavers. To-day, how different! Merriment, companionship, every one apparently contented with the world and all therein!"

"Life is made up of lights and shades," said Father Underwood. "It is better so, else the continued glare of the sun of happiness would be too great for mortal endurance."

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"I suppose so; but sometimes it seems as if some people had all the light, while others all the shade—a sort of uneven distributing of the good things of life."

"I often think the same, and wonder why it is so," Mrs. Darlington joined in.

"Father Underwood," Mr. Wendell went on, "from your quiet, even life you are able to look out over the world and gain a truer insight into the whys and wherefores of existence than is given to us unfortunate mortals who are caught in the maelstrom of life. Tell us your views as to why some lives are so happy, while others are so filled with sorrow and trouble."

"Into each life some sorrow must come, and does come, as well as joy. It is so decreed by a Divine Will which orders all things well. It is by this that characters are molded."

"Yet I have known people who apparently never had a sorrow nor care in the world, people whom I could almost envy," said Mr. Wendell.

"You do well to say 'apparently.' Sometimes those lives which seem the most placid have underneath a turbulence least expected; again, there are souls which live in a seeming tempest that have within a calm that is a haven of rest."

"I suppose so," agreed Mr. Wendell. "Appearances are often misleading."

The conversation was assuming a too serious tone, and the hostess sought to change the subject by saying:

"Did you know of the engagement of Miss Eliot?"

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She is to be married in the autumn to a man in New York. They were lovers years ago, but for some reason they were not married—some lovers' quarrel, I presume."

Just then two or three young ladies came up to the table, overhearing the remark, and one of them said, gayly:

"Yes. Helen is to be married in October, and my married sister is to be her matron-of-honor. I am so glad, for Helen is a darling. She is just the age of my sister, and they were always great friends."

"Your sister, though, has been married for years, has n't she?" asked one of the girls.

"Yes; ten years. She has three of the dearest children you ever saw. One of them is named 'Beatrice,' after me."

"It is strange that Miss Eliot has not married before. I think she is one of the handsomest women in California," remarked one of the group. "She surely must have had many offers."

"She was betrothed to this same man years and years ago, but something broke off the match," replied Beatrice. "However, 'All's well that ends well,' as the books say."

"So she has waited for him all these years," remarked one of the girls. "I would like to see myself waiting years for any man. They are not worth it. There are too many others."

Here Miss van Allston smiled pleasantly at the speaker, and suggested:

"Perhaps she has not really waited for him all

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these years, but, having once loved him, could not love another."

"I don't believe in such constancy. If I had a quarrel with one man I would marry the next one who asked me," laughingly said the girl.

"You, Miss van Allston, evidently believe in a first and only love?" interposed Mr. Wendell.

"I do," she replied, lightly, but with considerable earnestness showing in her eyes. "I think if one really loves, it must last always, come what may."

"I fear I am not a competent judge. I have been around the world a great deal, but in my whole forty years of life I have never felt the tender passion. I suppose the right lady has not appeared on the scene."

"When she does appear you will know her, I am sure," said Miss van Allston.

"O, Miss van Allston!" exclaimed one of the girls, "tell us a real, true love-story. I know you can."

"I think that one of you is more in practice than I. Beatrice, let us hear from you. You must be able to give us some very exciting experiences," Miss van Allston replied.

"O, mine are all uninteresting and prosaic. We want to hear something really romantic. Tell us about some of your love affairs."

Miss van Allston smiled, shaking her head deprecatingly.

"Perhaps Miss van Allston is like me—the right person has not yet appeared," said Mr. Wendell.

"O, yes, he has—I am sure so—a half dozen of them," banteringly urged Beatrice.

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"There could never be but one for me," replied Miss van Allston, with feigned lightness, but with a slight tremor in her voice which passed unnoticed.

"Well, then tell us of the one."

"I did not say there is one. I said there could be but one," said Miss van Allston.

At this Mr. Wendell chanced to look up, and he saw in Miss van Allston's face that which told him that their joking, thoughtless words had touched a chord little dreamed of by the speakers. His chivalrous nature was touched. With delicate thoughtfulness he turned the subject, saying:

"Why will you ladies dilate on love in the presence of a confirmed old bachelor like me? If you don't stop I shall enliven the conversation by quoting mathematical facts and figures, and by elucidating engineering principles in general."

Miss van Allston understood Mr. Wendell's thoughtfulness, and after a moment she suggested that they go across to another part of the lawn where stood a Japanese booth. Geisha girls were dancing, and in the midst of gayety the requested love-story was forgotten.

Mrs. Darlington was an ideal hostess. Hospitality was with her a fine art. Without seeming exertion she made all feel at home, and divined just what would be of the most interest to each guest.

At six o'clock the local trains brought an accession to the number already there. As the fathers, husbands, brothers, and friends of those present reached the lawn there was a renewal of activities. After his day of business in town every man was

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hungry, and the refreshment booths did an active business, the merry girls who waited on the tables vied with each other as to the serving of the dainties.

Sousa's Band had been playing at Golden Gate Park for a week past; but as its engagement terminated the day before, its services had been volunteered for this evening, for the benefit of charity. It was nearing eight o'clock and the musicians were tuning their instruments. There had been complete forgetfulness of the passing of time, and now there was a rush to that part of the grounds where a platform had been arranged for the accommodation of the players.

The increasing darkness of the oncoming night was brilliantly illuminated by the moon, which had risen some time ago. Soon the concert was in full progress, and the grounds, which comprised several acres, were practically deserted except that part in proximity to the band.

At some distance away a lonely figure was standing in the shadows, near a fountain. So still was that figure that it might easily have been taken for one of the marble statues which were here and there over the lawn.

After a moment the figure moved slightly, and it could be seen that it was a woman who was thus standing there apart from the others. Apparently she was not in accord with the joyousness of the occasion, for a faint sigh escaped her lips, accompanied by a little plaintive movement of the arms to the head.

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There could be heard the applause of the people as the band finished one of its selections. Again the music started. It was most entrancing—the strains of music in the distance, the tinkling of the fountain in the foreground, the varying shadows as the breezes stirred the foliage of the trees, while the silver moon looked calmly down on all.

“Constance!”

Quickly the woman turned, but made no reply.

“Constance, I am lonely. May I talk with you?”

Almost inaudibly the woman said:

“Donald!”

Again the voice asked: “May I come to you? I must talk with you. I am very lonely.”

The reply came, soft and low:

“Come, Donald.”

The speaker drew nearer and stood directly in front of her.

“Constance,” he began, “I have submitted in writing to my ecclesiastical superiors a summary of my convictions as to things spiritual. I know not how these convictions will be received. Should they be taken as heretical, then must I forever loose myself from affiliation with the Church in which I now minister, for I can teach only as I believe. Already I have heard whispers among my colleagues as to the possible unfavorable outcome of my opinions and beliefs.

“With thought comes growth. Day by day ideas grow plain to me, and the way seems clear.”

The speaker paused, then began abruptly:

“Constance, why shall we two continue in this

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way? Others have happiness and love. Why not we? Must we, who are innocent, continue to suffer because of the wretched cruelty of another? The past we could not help. The present is ours. It is for us—for you—to say whether we shall have that happiness which belongs to us—which is our birthright—which should have been ours, and would have been, all these years.”

“But, Donald—”

“I know what you would say; but my first duty is to you. No Church, no ecclesiastical superior, could gainsay that.”

“But what of your lifework—that work which you so love, and have loved for so many years?”

“One can be a useful teacher and preacher of the Word without ever occupying a pulpit. My work shall still be carried on, with a deeper and a higher purpose. Do you think that by having you at my side it would end my desire to love and serve humanity? Far from it. It would be increased an hundred-fold. We will make the most of our lives—forgetting the cruel past—and so live and work and pray that others will be uplifted and strengthened by our being.

“Come, dear, let the decision be made. It is right. There are not two sides to the question. It has all become most plain to me.”

“But, Donald, our lives have been so different! Our natures have been molded in a different form. Suppose there should come disappointment when it would be too late. Suppose you would have regrets. As for myself—”

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The woman paused. The man waited eagerly for her to continue.

“‘As for you,’ what, dear?”

“As for me, I would ask nothing happier than to be with you forever,” she replied.

He took her hand passionately.

“Then, dear, come! There is nothing further to question. As for me, I have thoroughly and carefully weighed the situation. The way is very clear to me.”

“Donald, let us wait yet a little longer. It has been so many years that a few months more will hardly count.”

“Each day seems an age. Constance, you know me well. I am not the man to consider lightly a step fraught with so much meaning. Neither am I a man to follow where pleasure might lead, if that path should be away from what is right. Neither are we children that we do not know our own minds.”

“I am thinking only of you, dear,” she replied.

“Constance,” urged the man, “you know how great is my love for you. Have we not been defrauded, kept out of our own? Why should we voluntarily add to this?”

“Look at me, Constance! In the many years that have followed that long ago I have never ceased to think of you, nor to love you. The remembrance of you made me a better man, truer to my Maker and to my fellow-beings. Do you think that what I am to-night asking of you is but the result of hasty thought that would be dissipated with the morn? No, Constance, you know me better than that.”

“Donald, it is needless to tell you I love you.”

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“Then, let us go forth together, hand in hand, and work out the destiny which God manifestly intended for us. We are both still young. We will forget the great wrong done us, and be happy each with the other, living out God’s promise to us. Come, dear one, what shall it be?”

She had been standing close by him, with perfect naturalness of manner, a manner that had in it womanly compassion, mingled with undisguised affection. A moment before he had put his arm about her, and she had let it remain there calmly and without question.

There was now silence between the speakers. Soft strains of music came through the air, while the fountain continued its play; but they gave no heed. Both knew that it was a vital moment, and the thoughts of each were too busy to give heed to externals.

At last the woman moved from his embrace and stood at a little distance. The man hastily scanned her face, fearing to read thereon destruction of his hopes.

“Constance!” he said with a pleading tone.

At this she moved a little farther away, and with a something in her attitude that he had not seen before. He looked at her more intently, and then he knew. No need of words to read his answer. With joy he tried to take her in his arms, but she moved to a greater distance.

O woman, what strange contradictions are in thy nature! Tenderness, gentleness, compassion, all in one, yet with a mighty reserve over all!

“Constance, tell me your answer. I read it in

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your face, but I long to hear your lips speak the words."

Very slowly she replied:

"Donald, your work. You must not leave it."

"What if that work leaves me?"

"Wait till then."

"And then—"

"Then my answer would be as you wish."

"But, Constance, would it not also be as you wish?"

A faint flush overspread her face, while tears dimmed her eyes, as she very faintly, but with ineffable sweetness, replied:

"Yes."

Without waiting for her consent he took her to his breast with almost boyish impetuosity. All else was forgotten except that they two were together. He kissed her tenderly, reverently.

At last she said, "Donald, I fear it is getting late."

They found that it was nearly time for the fête to close. The concert was already finished, and the guests were moving about the grounds. They left the place where they had been standing. Near the house they met a group of acquaintances, among them being the girl, Beatrice, who had jokingly requested the recital of a love-story.

"Why, here are Father Underwood and Miss van Allston. I do believe that you two have missed half the concert, and have been studying the stars," she said laughingly.

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Another interposed:

“Well, I do not blame them. I, too, have a scientific turn of mind—when I am in good company.”

Amid laughter and the exchange of good-byes the party broke up, and agreeing that it had been the happiest and most successful May-day celebration within their remembrance.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Interrupted Excommunication.

THE following morning Father Underwood found in his mail a notice that a registered letter was held at the post-office for him. The sender allowed the department no discretion in the delivery, it was stated, but demanded that the letter should be delivered to the person addressed only. Underwood fancied that it was a confidential communication from some client, or from some person in need or sorrow, and he hastened at once to the post-office to obtain it. To his surprise he found that the letter was from the archbishop.

"His Grace is unusually careful to-day," said the clerk, an old friend of Father Underwood. "Perhaps you are to be appointed bishop."

The priest made some reply and turned aside to open and read the letter. It was a summons to present himself at the chancery of the archbishop that afternoon at three o'clock. In conclusion was quoted a Latin sentence, which, translated, signified, "Fail not at your peril."

Underwood supposed that his views on doctrinal matters had met with the severe disapprobation of the Church authorities, and that the summons was a consequence thereof. He knew from the form of the document that an ecclesiastical trial of some sort

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awaited him. The words, "Fail not at your peril," showed to him how greatly the archbishop was taking, or had been forced to take, the situation. So he thought. The real state of affairs, he was soon to learn, was very different from that which he was imagining.

He walked slowly towards St. Carmel's parish house with his mind disquieted by many thoughts. He believed that soon he must leave the Church in which he had so long labored. The present situation could end in naught else. If his beliefs were not acceptable to the Church authorities he could not retract as he must follow his conscience, and the inevitable result would be withdrawal from the Church. Though he had foreseen this, at least in some measure, the thought was an unpleasant one. Still, the future was in God's hands, and it showed ever bright before him. It had been his purpose always, not only to prepare men for heaven, but also to get something of heaven into men's lives while in this world. This he felt he could do, in the light of his newer convictions, in any Church organization, or independently of any such organization.

Underwood entered the parish house and went upstairs to his room. As he passed the reception rooms where so often he had met both friend and stranger in his office of spiritual physician, he felt as does the youth who leaves his home to go forth into the world and its battles.

When he sat before his desk, where for these many years he had studied and pondered, there came to him a sense of happiness that at last his feet rested on solid

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ground, and that he could see the way clear before him.

At luncheon where he presided, as he always did except when Monsignor Montrose happened to be present, Father Clifford was relating some of his experiences in Rome. He had made his studies there preparatory for the priesthood.

"Doctor McWilliam," he was saying, "who has just been appointed a professor in the Catholic University in Washington, was one of the most brilliant students in Rome during my stay there. The Holy City, of course, is the great center of ecclesiastical learning, and thousands of students from everywhere in the four quarters of the globe are studying there.

"It is the custom to hold great competitive examinations, several times a year, before the pope or his representatives. Each of the many colleges there may send its brightest student to contest for the prizes offered.

"During his four years in the theology department McWilliam was invariably chosen to represent his college, the American College, and never once did he fail to win some trophy in those spirited intellectual contests. Crack men from the German Catholic universities were often pitted against him, and those German schools are as thorough as any in the world; yet the American student rarely failed to best them."

"Tell me," interrupted Underwood, "did those disputes touch on the higher critical methods, or the results of these methods when applied to Scripture and Church history?"

"Certainly not," returned Father Clifford. "They

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touched on the truth of Catholic doctrine and practice as demonstrated by the philosophy and theology of Thomas Aquinas."

Underwood made no comment. Father Clifford then went on:

"At the completion of his course in theology McWilliam won his doctorate after a public examination of four hours. I shall never forget that day. The American aspirant to the doctor's cap was seated in a large chair on a dais at one end of the great reception hall in the college building. Before him were grouped representative professors from nearly every college in Rome. They were all anxious to try the metal of the foreigner who so often had won away laurels from their prize pupils. With them were seated a number of resident cardinals of Rome, and many archbishops and bishops, who make up the diplomatic corps around the pope. All these men were clad in the robes and insignia of their office. The purple and scarlet of imperial Rome were in strange contrast to the simple black attire of the student."

"I have often read of these events," commented one of the other priests, "but have never been present. It is one of my great desires to go to Rome."

Father Clifford continued:

"For four long hours the learned professors propounded questions to McWilliam, but never once was he found at fault in his explanation of doctrine, nor in the distinctions in the major and minor premise. It was wonderful. Towards the end of the disputation the pope himself entered the room. It was at a moment of intense interest. McWilliam had negatived

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the major premise of Cardinal Satolli, who was his examiner at that moment, and Satolli was trying to force him to a *reductio ad absurdum*. Try as the Cardinal could, the American always evaded him, and was always ready with the *sub distingo*.

"It was like the game of hare and hounds. When the hare seemed about to be caught, he would double and dodge and the chase would begin over. Finally, the master of ceremonies gave the signal that the time for examination had elapsed. Satolli laughed heartily at his own discomfiture. Hastening over to McWilliam, he grasped his hand and shook it heartily.

"The pope applauded and cried out, 'Brava, brava, for the American!' The Holy Father was as excited and pleased as any one."

"A very unusual and interesting event, indeed," commented Underwood.

Three o'clock in the afternoon found Underwood at the archepiscopal residence. He was admitted at once and conducted to the archbishop's private office. His Grace was seated in a large armchair, with his head bowed in his hands. As Underwood entered he looked up, and his face showed that he had some work to perform which was most disagreeable to him.

Soon his appearance changed, and both his eyes and face seemed to glow, as if the thought of the merit of some act which he was about to perform was pleasing to him. There was a strain of fanaticism in the archbishop which few suspected.

Underwood seated himself before the archbishop.

"I received your summons and am present, as you requested."

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"Holy Church does not request attendance when the laws of God and man have been violated. She commands attendance, and punishes the offender as with the scourge of God."

Underwood had not expected such reception, but he knew the archbishop too well to doubt his Grace's sincere earnestness.

Again Underwood said:

"I have been summoned here, if you wish. I am ready to hear what you have to say to me."

The face of the archbishop was cold and stern, as he said:

"Rash and profane despoiler of the tabernacle of God, do you not fear the thunderbolts from heaven, as the reward of your treachery?"

Underwood sprang to his feet. "Archbishop Boylston," he said, "some time ago I submitted to you a summary of my doctrinal views and beliefs. You were unable to decide as to their orthodoxy, and sent them to Rome. If these views have been condemned I wish to know it, and I will govern myself accordingly. I am unable to understand either your attitude or unusual language to me."

The archbishop's eyes opened wide and shone with a mocking light.

"Sit down," he said, "and listen."

Underwood felt astounded and outraged, but resumed his seat. He was completely mystified by the attitude of the archbishop.

His Grace went on:

"The priest, another Christ—nay, Christ Himself, as some spiritual writers say—if he profanes his sa-

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cred office, becomes more despicable than another Judas. If the desecration has been a matter of years, then the more appalling the sacrilege. Do you still pretend to misunderstand me?"

Underwood's face was white to the very lips, but his voice was clear and steady, as he said:

"I do not pretend to misunderstand you. I simply do not know what you are talking about. It all appears to me to be a piece of melodrama. Moreover, although I venerate your years and your position as a religious leader, I can not accept the insult you have offered me, but demand retraction and apology."

His Grace's laugh was grating and mocking, as he said:

"Give back to God the soul you have ruined by diabolical machination, under the guise of fatherly friendship. Retract the evil, lying words you have spoken, under the sacred veil of secrecy, apologize to God in sackcloth and ashes for a misspent and defiling life. You have been a wolf in sheep's clothing, destroying the innocent of the flock. Like the tiger in the thicket have you waited for your prey. Only the mercy of the tiger do you know."

Underwood's eyes blazed with indignation.

The archbishop's face shone with a strange light. He felt that he was pleasing God by thus attempting to humiliate and annoy one whom he deemed a culprit. The two men sat looking each other in the eyes for a moment. Underwood was at white heat. The other was calm, with the calmness of the Inquisitor.

The younger man broke the silence that was intense:

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“Archbishop Boylston, you use language to me which implies grave insult. You refuse me any explanation, but by your manner you add insult to injury. If you have any charge to bring against me, then do so. If my doctrinal views have been declared incompatible with Catholic teaching, then say so. I do not intend to leave this room until you make some explanation of your unwonted language and manner to me to-day.”

“Then you still persist in your brazen impiety. You still wish to emulate the horrid pride of Lucifer whom St. Michael cast out of heaven?” his Grace asked.

No charge of any kind was preferred against him; but certainly the archbishop’s attitude and words were those of one who had prejudged a most serious case, and who was disposed to harry and humiliate the accused in every possible way.

“Archbishop Boylston,” Underwood said, “you have known me from my boyhood.”

The archbishop neither denied nor affirmed. He continued looking at the priest with the same quizzical, unpitying gaze.

Underwood went on:

“You knew of the unusual circumstances of my youth, yet you advised me to study for the priesthood, and with your own hands you invested me with sacred orders. You have made me pro-rector of St. Carmel’s, and I have never heard from you any word save that of praise for the administration of St. Carmel’s parish.

“The growth of my religious opinions and beliefs

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has been made known to you, and you personally have never deemed them objectionable. It was only after my earnest and long continued solicitation that you consented to send them to Rome, that the Church authorities might give these opinions their official consideration. If my opinions have been adjudged heretical, why not tell me in so many words?

“The unusual orderings of my life, reaching back almost to my boyhood, all are known to you. The present reviving of an epoch in my life, which epoch I had deemed closed forever, is likewise known to you. In regard to it I have the written opinion of the apostolic delegate, to which opinion you have appended your own name in corroboration, that in a certain contingency I should retire from the priesthood of the Catholic Church, and live as a layman therein. This same statement, countersigned by you, goes on to say that, in all honor and conscience, I could do this at any time; whereas, I would be actually bound so to do if the contingency referred to should come to pass.

“As you know, I have sought to do what is right and just and best. Now, I have been summoned here—as you put it—have listened to intimation of some outrageous charge or charges, with threats of some dire punishment in this world, and in the next; yet you give me no clew to the meaning of this strange situation. Your language and manner is such that I can not accept from you nor from any man without explanation or satisfaction.

“Archbishop Boylston, I demand that you tell me your meaning, and without equivocation.”

A sarcastic look overspread the archbishop's face.

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His hands clenched and opened, with the excess of nervous tension.

"Son of Satan," he said, "heir of perdition, whitened sepulcher, you demand of me that I speak without equivocation. So shall it be.

"I ordained you, as you have said. On my knees through the long hours of last night did I beg God's forgiveness for having done so. Had I prayed and fasted more God would have enlightened me, I know, as to your true character. Then, would I never have desecrated the sacred oils by anointing with them your sinful hands and brazen forehead.

"In earlier times, and better times, you sacrilegious thief of souls, Holy Church would have given you over to the secular arm. You would have been dragged to the public square of the city, your forehead and hands scraped with sharp glass, emblematic of the removal of every trace of those sacred oils. Then your body would be given to the flames, and your ashes would be scattered to the four winds, that there might not remain in the world the memory of a wretch so vile as you.

"Even now the Church is the right arm of God and has her power and prerogatives; and I, the representative of the pope, shall exercise them."

The archbishop turned to the desk near at hand, on which was lying his canonical vestments. He hastily donned them, placing the towering miter on his head and grasping the long, heavy shepherd's staff, emblematic of episcopal authority. He began reading the words of solemn excommunication from the *Liber Pontificalis*.

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Underwood sprang on the archbishop, and, wrenching away the shepherd's crook, bent it on his knee until the brass material crackled and snapped. Then he snatched the tall miter from the archbishop's head, and, flinging it to the floor, stamped on it. His Grace pushed forward to interpose, but the enormous strength of the outraged priest hurled him back.

Underwood raised his hand and in the fraction of a minute would have struck down his superior; but, lying on the desk, where the vestments had been, was a sheet of paper to which his attention was attracted by seeing his own name and Mrs. Stoddard's written thereon. He turned from the archbishop, deliberately took up the paper and read it. It was the document which Mrs. Stoddard had signed some time before in Monsignor Montrose's private office. In it Underwood saw that he was accused, by Mrs. Stoddard, of the terrible sin of soliciting in the confessional for immoral purposes. To one so skilled as was Underwood in canon law and Catholic practice no further explanation was necessary. The archbishop had accepted the accusation as true; and he had used the tremendous power given him by the Church, in which was the right to try, judge, and punish the one accused without giving him any explanation whatsoever.

He understood that the purpose of the archbishop was to depose him from the priesthood and to excommunicate him from the Church.

His Grace stood by his desk, leaning on it, looking at his miter crumpled on the floor, and at his pastoral staff bent and shattered.

Underwood was the first to break the silence.

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"Archbishop Boylston," he said, "this paper contains a cowardly lie! I do not know how such a statement could have been obtained. It is false, diabolically false! The Church allows you to act, to be sure, but only on 'a conscience sufficiently informed,' as the consecrated phrase is."

The archbishop spoke slowly and with evident effort.

"I am the judge of my acts, not you. Let me tell you, moreover, that you hold in your hand a privileged document; and you are bound, under the seal of the confessional, as to both its existence and its contents."

"Not so," replied Underwood. "This letter is addressed to Monsignor Montrose. It should have been addressed to you, according to canonical usage. When Montrose allowed it to leave his possession it lost its character as a privileged document, and I now have the right to use it in any way I see fit."

"You have insulted and defied lawful authority," said the archbishop, pointing to the wreckage on the floor.

"I have defied the unjust use of a tremendous power given to you by the Church. The unjust use of lawful authority is tyranny; and I have broken and trampled on those emblems, which, by your acts this day, you have made to represent tyranny."

The archbishop straightened his form, and pointed to the door, saying sternly:

"Go! and return when I summon you."

"Archbishop Boylston," said Underwood, "you have accused me of the gravest wrong, and have be-

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lieved me guilty of such. You wished to visit the extreme ecclesiastical punishment on me, without any trial or explanation whatsoever. Whether you still believe me guilty you do not say. Therefore, your accusation still stands, and I shall take means to prove its falsity."

"I wish to visit injustice on no one," said the archbishop, "but I shall maintain the dignity of my position as archbishop. This dignity has suffered violation."

"My good name and honor I shall protect," returned the other. "Your position and dignity will fare ill if you use them as instruments to work injustice."

"That is my concern," said his Grace. "Remember, I expect reparation for this day's work," pointing to his miter and staff.

Underwood made no reply. He placed the letter carefully in his pocketbook, left the room, and closed the door.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Beginning of the End.

IN a large, airy room in a private hospital a young woman had been lying for days. At times she was in a semi-stupor; at other times, delirious. The physicians came and went on their stated visits, and in the interim the skillful, steady hands of the nurses cared for the stricken girl.

Allow no visitor to see her, keep her perfectly quiet, and 'phone him at once in the event of any change in her condition, was the strict order given by her own physician.

There was something unusual in the manner of her collapse, he had said, and he looked for a sudden change in her condition at any time, meaning that complete recovery might take place, or that the patient might, on the contrary, with little or no warning, pass away.

In periods of delirium the patient would at times cry aloud, and again speak in low, caressing tones, as if addressing a lover, or perhaps an infant.

When she spoke it was always in Italian, and no one in hearing distance understood her. Had any one present known her language, she would have been heard addressing in endearing terms George, who was

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her heart, her soul, her very life. How very happy they were, George and she! How she loved him, and how he loved her!

Then her mood would change, and she would declaim against the man whom she had previously addressed in loving tones. He was a traitor, foresworn and dangerous! But he should not injure the priest who was her friend. She knew the nature of the paper that her dear Eleanor had been induced to sign. The traitor must give up that paper, else—else—not three but thirty Sicilian stilettos would be pointed at his heart before another day.

Mrs. Stoddard came each day to the hospital to bring flowers to Signora Valenti, for the sick woman was she, and also to inquire as to her condition.

To-day the head nurse happened to be in the reception room when Mrs. Stoddard called, and she gave permission for the visitor to go to Adelina's room, to remain but a few moments.

"The patient revived shortly ago, and is her normal self," the nurse said. "I 'phoned her physician, Doctor Burton, immediately, according to his order."

Mrs. Stoddard noiselessly entered the room, and the nurse in charge motioned her to a chair near the window. She sat without moving a muscle and looked on the face of her friend who had fallen asleep. Very little trace of illness was on that face. It was about the same as when Mrs. Stoddard had last seen it. The signora's eyes were closed and she was breathing regularly. As Mrs. Stoddard gazed at the delicately chiseled features of her friend, she wondered why one so fragile, so young, so beautiful, should have been made

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to suffer through treachery. Despite physical weakness she had won laurels through consummate skill in art, and, finally, had even shaken herself free from the grasp of the dreaded "white plague."

In a few moments Adelina awakened.

"Ah, my dear Eleanor," she exclaimed, "how glad I am to see you! I shall be better soon. I have much to do."

"Calm yourself," said Mrs. Stoddard. "I think you should not try to talk. I shall go away very soon, and return to-morrow to see you."

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Signora Valenti's physician. He had been in a distant part of the city when the change came in the condition of Signora Valenti, and it had been difficult to find him. When he received the word he hastened post-haste to the hospital. He rapidly took note of the state of his patient, her pulse, respiration, temperature, and so forth.

"The change has come," he said, "and, as I predicted, it came suddenly. You are now in much the same condition of health that you were before the attack. A rest of a few days, and you will be about as well as ever. You must feel very much now as if you had awakened from troubled sleep."

"No doubt it is so," returned the patient. "I have been much disturbed by dreams and disquieting fears. Now I am myself again, and my dear friend is here, and we must become active at once."

"All very well," said the doctor, laughingly, "but not at once. You must rest for a while. When you are stronger I must inquire of you the stress of cir-

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circumstances, or the shock, which induced the condition into which you fell. It is very full of professional interest."

The busy man took his leave, and the two women were left alone.

"Eleanor," said the signora, eagerly, "I have much work to do, and I must do it at once. My illness at this time was most unfortunate. How long is it since we visited together Monsignor Montrose?"

"It is about a week," was the reply.

"How unfortunate!" exclaimed the signora. "Tell me, have you seen anything of Father Underwood since that time?"

"I have seen nothing of him," was the reply. "He is at St. Carmel's. Monsignor Montrose is out of the city, no one seems to know where."

"Eleanor," said Adelina, "do you know Father Darsi, the Jesuit superior, who lives in Hayes Street?"

"I do, indeed," was the reply.

"He is my father's half-brother," said Adelina. "Following our visit to Monsignor Montrose I called on my relative. From him I learned, at least in part, of what might be the nature of the paper you signed for Monsignor Montrose. Very likely that in it there is charged some grave delinquency against Father Underwood. Monsignor Montrose would use such document to further his own ends, should such a thing be possible. He is wicked enough to do anything. After leaving Father Darsi I was hastening to find you when that strange illness overcame me. I remember nothing more, until a short time ago I awakened and found

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myself here. Now, my dearest friend, we must act, and act at once. Our Father Underwood is in danger of some serious difficulty, I fear. I hope we are not too late."

"But, my dear Adelina," faltered Mrs. Stoddard, "you are not able—I do not know—"

"Calm yourself," said the other, taking command, as by right, "I am able."

Adelina touched a button, and a nurse came immediately.

"My clothing, please," she said.

"Only by direction of your physician, Madam," said the nurse.

"Very well, hand me the 'phone," was the reply.

A desk 'phone was brought, and in a moment she was in conversation with her physician.

"Doctor Burton," said she, "I wish to have my clothing brought to me as it is necessary that I leave the hospital at once."

"My friend," replied the doctor, "you absolutely require several days of quiet before moving, and then must exercise the greatest care until the whole effects of your recent collapse have passed away."

"I feel myself much more able to leave here than you have judged," was the response. "Moreover, I must attend to affairs of the greatest importance, and which allow no delay."

"Your health should be of the greatest concern to you just at present," argued the doctor.

"To me there are graver concerns even than my health. I must work now, and rest to-night or to-morrow."

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"Well," consented the physician, reluctantly, "take some competent person with you when you leave the hospital, and guard carefully against excitement or over-exertion. Kindly send word to my office when you reach the St. Francis, that I may know how you are faring."

"I shall let you know when I reach my apartments," was the reply.

A nurse aided her to an adjoining apartment which was to serve as a dressing room.

"I shall return for you shortly, Eleanor," she said as she went out. She assumed command naturally, and as by right.

Mrs. Stoddard sat waiting for a time, very busy with her own thoughts. At last an attendant came to the room and told her that a gentleman, the Reverend Father Underwood, was in the reception room below, and wished to see her.

Involuntarily Mrs. Stoddard started to call Signora Valenti to go with her, but she did not do so when she remembered her friend's frail condition.

"Very well," she replied calmly, but with heart beating hard, "I shall go at once."

She was conducted to the elevator, and in a moment was at the door of the reception room. Father Underwood stood within, waiting. He greeted her gravely, stepped to the door and closed it, moved a chair towards her, and said:

"I wished very much to see you this afternoon. On inquiring at your house I found that you are here, and I am fortunate in seeing you so soon."

His demeanor was courteous, but his face was

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grave and stern. Mrs. Stoddard had never seen him bear himself with such dignity.

"I am visiting Adelina," she said. "She has been very ill, but is now better."

"I did not know of Signora Valenti's illness, but am very glad to hear that she is recovering."

"I think she will come in here soon," said Mrs. Stoddard, looking towards the door. She felt the need of the stimulation of her friend's presence and dominating nature.

"I wish to see you alone at present," said the priest. He drew from his pocketbook the letter that he had taken from the archbishop's desk, and handed it to her.

"Read this," he said, "and tell me if you signed this document, and why you did so."

She took the paper and looked it over.

"I do not know—I think—" she said confusedly.

"Did you sign that paper?" asked the priest sternly.

The woman sat erect in her chair, looked Father Underwood in the face, and said:

"I did sign a paper, and it was for Monsignor Montrose, that I remember distinctly, but I did not know its contents."

"Is it possible that you signed this document, containing a terrible accusation against me, and even before a witness, without knowing what you were signing?"

"That man—Monsignor Montrose—seemed to hypnotize me that night," was the response. "There is no excuse—I know this full well—but there is an ex-

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planation. I was passive to his will, and remember but little of what I said or did. The following day Signora Valenti—I had told her what I could of the occurrence of that night—went to Monsignor Montrose and he signed a paper in which it is stated that he knows nothing against you nor me, but much in our favor. I have that paper at my home.”

“This document was given to Monsignor Montrose under the seal of the confessional. So it purports. Is it so?”

“I never went to confession to him in my life, and never could!” declared the lady, indignantly. “I seemed possessed that night, almost under a spell, but I know that the document that I signed related in some way to you and me. Adelina and I saw him the following day, in his private office. Adelina faced him with the greatest coolness and determination. He denied the possession of any paper under my signature, except some subscription list. Then Monsignor Montrose signed the paper which I have. After Adelina left me that day she was seized with that strange illness, and she was brought here. I wished very much to bring the paper to you, and to tell you the whole story, but I had not the courage. Besides, I thought this paper which Monsignor Montrose had signed would protect you, as well as me.”

“This statement which you signed for Monsignor Montrose is under the seal of the confessional, so it reads. According to the laws of the Church, he would be bound to deny, even under oath, all knowledge of its contents—even, indeed, of its existence. He might well sign the paper which you have in your possession.

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It would not militate in any way against the effectiveness of this statement which I have just showed you."

Mrs. Stoddard was nonplused. A knock at the door interrupted further conversation. The low, even-toned voice of Signora Valenti was heard saying:

"May I come in?"

Father Underwood opened the door, and said courteously, "Certainly, enter."

The signora dismissed the attendant who had assisted her to the door, and with steady step walked to Father Underwood, and held out her hand to him.

"My friends are not happy," she said.

"O Adelina," cried Mrs. Stoddard. "How glad I am that you 've come!"

"I had just learned of Father Underwood's presence here, and I hastened to you." Then turning to Father Underwood, she said: "Perhaps Eleanor has told you of her visit and mine to Monsignor Michael Montrose, and what occurred there."

Underwood signified assent.

"I had supposed so," said the Italian girl.

"Eleanor did not tell you, perhaps, that I paid a visit to my uncle, Father Darsi, and learned from him what might be the nature of a paper such as she signed for the Monsignor?"

"No, she has not told me," was the reply.

"I have in my possession, however, a paper such as you refer to, no doubt. I have already showed it to Mrs. Stoddard," continued Underwood.

"O Adelina!" cried Mrs. Stoddard, again. "It is what you feared it would be, what Father Darsi intimated to you."

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The poor woman covered her face with her hands, in grief and confusion.

"Eleanor did not tell you, I know, that I knew Monsignor Montrose some years ago in Naples?" said Adelina.

"No, indeed," replied Underwood with interest.

Signora Valenti gave a short but graphic word sketch of her life in Naples with Montrose. Underwood listened with close attention, his lips tightening as he heard the recital of betrayal and desertion.

"This is the paper which Monsignor Montrose obtained from Mrs. Stoddard and gave to Archbishop Boylston," said Underwood, placing the document in Signora Valenti's hand.

"A very pleasant way to rid one's self of a disliked person," she said, as she read the statement. "Easier than the stiletto, more quiet, and another is tricked into doing the evil work. Besides, by this method the victim would still live, enabling Monsignor Montrose to enjoy his discomfiture."

"Mrs. Stoddard must come with me to the archbishop," said Underwood, "and declare the falsity of the charge made."

"I shall accompany you, with your permission," said Adelina, "and throw some light on the character of this monsignor."

"Signora Valenti," said Underwood, "think of your illness. Besides, the archbishop would not accept any accusations which you might make, unless you had proof."

"I am not so ill that I can not go with you on such an errand," returned the signora, "and I can bring

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proof of what I assert, and proof of my identity, as well."

Underwood stepped to the telephone in the hall, and soon learned from the archbishop that he was still in his office and would await Underwood's coming.

"It is just five o'clock, and I can yet gain entrance to the safety deposit vault where I keep my private papers," remarked Adelina.

She called up the garage where her automobile was kept and ordered it sent immediately to the hospital. In another moment she was in communication with Father Darsi. She spoke to him in Italian and with lightning-like rapidity. In a short time she returned to her friends in the reception room.

"I am fortunate in finding my Jesuit uncle in the city and at home. He is away much."

"Really, signora," said Father Underwood, "I can not consent that you go with Mrs. Stoddard and me on the errand which calls us to Archbishop Boylston's. You have arisen only this hour from a serious illness—"

"I could arise from a much more serious illness to assist my friends," the signora interrupted.

"But you are physically unable," Underwood objected.

"I have sufficient strength to follow along the line of duty. Be assured that I shall not faint by the way."

The automobile came dashing up at that moment, and the signora, turning to her friends, said:

"Come with me. I have one or two errands, and when I have attended to them I shall take you to the archbishop's house, if you will."

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They accepted the signora's invitation, Underwood assisting her down the hospital steps and into the automobile. She showed wonderful vitality for one who had been seriously ill so recently. A bright spot burned on either cheek and her eyes glowed with determination and vigor. Evidently she scented a battle royal in the distance, and was apparently enjoying it by anticipation.

Underwood's face was pale and set in strong lines. He was determined to resist, by every means in his power, any unjust procedure of the archbishop. Moreover, he intended to exact from Monsignor Montrose satisfaction for his unaccountable action in regard to the statement which Mrs. Stoddard had signed. Underwood implicitly believed what Mrs. Stoddard had said regarding the matter. The priest clenched his teeth as he thought of Montrose's duplicity. It would have gone hard with the monsignor had the two men met just then.

The automobile stopped before a large bank building in which were many safety deposit boxes. The signora disappeared but soon returned, bearing a small packet in her hand.

The next stop was before the Jesuit college in Hayes Street. Father Darsi was standing on the steps, awaiting them evidently. He assisted the signora to alight, and they drew a little apart from the others, talking together for a short time with great animation, as the Latins do. Soon they approached the others, and Darsi said:

"Father Underwood, I understand the difficulty in which circumstances have placed you. It happens

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that both Signora Valenti and I can be of material assistance to you, and we wish to offer you our best endeavors."

"I thank you," said Underwood, grasping the Jesuit's hand. "I am unable to express my appreciation of your goodness."

Father Darsi left them, saying: "I wish to re-enter the house for some papers which I have recently received. They will be of much interest at the proper time."

Underwood turned to Adelina Valenti.

"Signora Valenti," he said, "I wish to ask you in what manner you will throw light on the character of Monsignor Montrose. A blow has been struck at me from the dark, and it may prove very difficult for me to withstand it; but I could not allow you to give a statement of the past which might embarrass you, even though by so doing you would assist me."

"My friend," said Adelina, "the archbishop will be but one more to know of the folly of my trusting youth. If I assist you by what I do, I am happy."

Underwood began further remonstrance, but Father Darsi returned at that moment, and the great automobile went at high speed toward the archbishop's house, where they soon arrived.

Underwood assisted Signora Valenti to the door, insisting meanwhile that she say nothing to the archbishop of her life with Montrose in Naples.

"I must fight my battles without aid from the recital of that which can not be but a source of pain to you. I must insist that you do not speak of the past in Naples with Montrose."

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The Italian woman's eyes struck fire.

"I have thoroughly considered the matter, and I know my mind. Monsignor Michael Montrose this day shall learn that a daughter of Sicily can dare and do, as well as forbear."

The servant who opened the door said that the archbishop was in his private office awaiting Father Underwood.

In response to his Grace's invitation to enter, Underwood opened the door, and followed Signora Valenti, Mrs. Stoddard, and Father Darsi into the room. He introduced the two women to the archbishop, Darsi, of course, being known to him.

"I wish," said Underwood, "to have Signora Valenti and Father Darsi present at this interview, as well as Mrs. Stoddard. They know why I have come here."

"It shall be as you say," replied his Grace.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Swing of the Pendulum.

IMMEDIATELY after Father Underwood had left the archepiscopal residence in quest of Mrs. Stoddard to ask of her an explanation, the archbishop had 'phoned to the Hotel St. Mark in Oakland, requesting that Monsignor Montrose would be called to speak with him.

"Monsignor Montrose is out just at present," said the hotel clerk.

"Very well," replied the archbishop. "When he returns tell him to come at once to Archbishop Boylston's house in San Francisco."

Later, when the monsignor returned and received the message, he was overjoyed. He had visited his Grace the day previous. After discussing with him many Church matters of weighty interest, he artfully brought up the question of Father Underwood and the letter which Mrs. Stoddard had signed concerning him. The archbishop was at first disposed to allow the matter to wait for further consideration; but Montrose managed to intimate that other souls might be in danger from the deceitful ministrations of Underwood, and that it would be better to act decisively at once.

After a time Montrose saw that he had made an

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impression on the archbishop, and he persisted in his efforts. Finally, His Grace was brought to view the case through Montrose's eyes. The registered letter to Father Underwood from the archbishop was the result.

"At last I have succeeded," thought Montrose, when he received the archbishop's message from the clerk of the hotel. "His Grace wishes to tell me that he has acted regarding Underwood. My visit to the archbishop yesterday evidently did a world of good."

Monsignor Montrose hastened to the Southern Pacific station at Fourteenth and Franklin Streets, and caught the local train which carried him to the ferry.

In the meantime the office of the archbishop was a scene of marked tension. The honor and the career of a man hung in the balance, so it seemed; and his Grace was judge and divider over all. The archbishop did not wish to be unjust to any one, but he was determined to keep the garments of the Church free from wrinkle or spot.

Other men in far greater positions than that of the archbishop have suffered preconceptions to bias their judgment. Therefore has the just man known punishment, and the arrant knave has gone unscathed.

The archbishop sat in his great chair by the desk. Underwood was directly facing him, and Mrs. Stoddard, Signora Valenti, and Father Darsi were ranged at the side.

"Archbishop Boylston," said Underwood, "in this paper Mrs. Stoddard charges me with the gravest sin in the ecclesiastical code. It claims to have been given

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under the seal of the confessional. Monsignor Montrose is the confessor mentioned, and the statement is in his handwriting, Mrs. Stoddard merely signing it. She is now present, and I ask her to make a declaration of the truth or falsity of what is contained herein."

"Hold a moment, Father Underwood," said His Grace. "Are you willing to swear on the Holy Gospels that the charge contained in this statement is false?"

"I am," replied Underwood.

"Further," continued his Grace, "are you willing to go with me to my chapel, and kneel before the altar and swear on the Sacred Host, which is the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, that the charge in the statement is false? Are you willing to do this?"

"I am willing to do as you say," said Underwood with tightening lips. "Furthermore, I am willing to take any legitimate oath whatsoever that the statement is false."

"That is sufficient for the present," said his Grace. Then turning to Mrs. Stoddard, he asked:

"Is the charge contained in the paper you gave Monsignor Montrose true or false?"

"The charge is false, absolutely false. I was tricked into signing the paper. Furthermore, I have never made confession to Monsignor Montrose."

The archbishop looked suspiciously at the woman. It seemed to him that she must be playing a part. How could she have been tricked into signing such a paper? Once again there came over his face the look

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of the enthusiast, which Father Underwood had seen during his interview earlier in the afternoon. It did not bode well for Father Underwood's cause.

"The case stands thus," the archbishop said. "One of my priests, a very clever man, and a man of vast experience, is impelled by conscience to insist that a penitent of his sign a statement, and to see that such statement reaches my hand. The confessor views the soul of his penitent in a manner most opportune for him to determine as to its sincerity. He, of all the judges in the world, has the greatest opportunity for observation, and is the least liable to unworthy motives which might influence his judgment. When such a man as my friend and co-laborer, Monsignor Montrose—who, I might say, is almost my right arm—is impelled by conscience to see that this statement reaches me, then am I compelled to accept its truthfulness. Montrose came before me weeping, weeping for the disgrace of Holy Church, for the fall of a beloved brother, and for humiliation that he must procure this statement and bring it to me. The purity of the priesthood is more to me than is my own life, and I shall spare no one to protect the honor of the Church."

The archbishop's face glowed as he spoke, and the observers could see that he was thoroughly in earnest.

"Furthermore," his Grace went on, "Mrs. Stoddard, whose name is attached to this document, now comes before me and states that she was tricked into signing this paper. Also, that she has never made confession to Monsignor Montrose. I wish you no of-

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fense, Mrs. Stoddard, but I must say that I can not accept as true what you say."

"Archbishop," said Mrs. Stoddard, "I am ready to take my oath on the Holy Gospels that I have never made confession to Monsignor Montrose, and also that I have never made charge against Father Underwood. I am willing to swear it on the Blessed Sacrament." The lady was indignant, and plainly showed it, despite her awe of the archbishop.

Adelina Valenti sat quietly watching the proceedings, scarcely even moving. She was waiting for the proper moment when she should begin her part in the work. Father Darsi's keen, black eyes took careful note, apparently, of every move made.

Father Underwood was at white heat. Mrs. Stoddard was present and denied that she had accused him of any wrong-doing. Her denial was not accepted. She offered to substantiate her denial by taking the most solemn oath that her faith knew. The archbishop did not even reply to her offer.

"Monsignor Montrose is at the bottom of it all," Underwood said finally, in clear, even tones. "For some reason, unknown to me, he wishes my ruin—"

"I shall not listen to such words concerning the monsignor," exclaimed the archbishop. "He has already suffered too much from misunderstandings and calumnies, all of which he has borne with Christlike spirit. The cause of Christ has suffered also in this, that Montrose has not received greater recognition and risen higher in the hierarchic scale."

"All that you say about the confessor and the value of his acts in such a case as this do not apply to

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Montrose, for he is a thorough scoundrel and a despicable villain," said Underwood. He spoke coolly and deliberately, but with much emphasis.

Archbishop Boylston sprang to his feet.

"It is enough of this!" he exclaimed. "I know my duty and I shall fulfill my obligation. I ask all to retire except Father Underwood, who will remain with me."

Here Adelina spoke for the first time.

"Perhaps Father Underwood is right, and that Monsignor Michael Montrose is, indeed, a treacherous, despicable villain." She spoke in a low and sweet voice, with no more special emphasis than if she had been passing the time of day.

The archbishop looked at her with undisguised surprise. The voice was in keeping with the manner of the Italian girl, but the meaning of her words was not. His Grace had supposed that the girl was merely a friend whom Mrs. Stoddard had brought with her for companionship.

"Perhaps I should repeat," she said. "It may be that you are wrong in your estimate of Monsignor Michael Montrose, and that he is, as Father Underwood intimates, a traitorous, cowardly villain." She smiled sweetly at the archbishop, as if she had been seeking to entertain him with some casual remark.

His Grace was plainly nonplused. Indignation was commingled with his other feelings, but he was too puzzled to see how to express it. He began hesitatingly:

"Monsignor Montrose, I say—" when a knock was heard at the door.

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"Enter!" he interrupted himself.

The door opened, and there stood the monsignor. The servant had been given orders to conduct him, when he came, to the archbishop's private office. The monsignor had composed his mobile features into an expression of sorrow, which he thought would be fitting for the occasion. When he saw the company with the archbishop his jaw dropped. He was frankly surprised and embarrassed. This was one of the few times when Montrose lost his magnificent self-possession.

"Monsignor Montrose," said Underwood, "we have some urgent business to transact with you. Enter the room and allow me to close the door."

Montrose obeyed mechanically. Uninvited he seated himself and endeavored to regain his composure. His wits returned to him quickly. He found himself wondering at the presence of Father Darsi. Underwood's manner showed him that his connection with the affair was known.

"Monsignor Montrose," said Underwood, holding close to the monsignor the statement signed by Mrs. Stoddard, "this paper is in your handwriting, is it not?"

"It appears to be; but what of it?" replied Montrose, outwardly composed, but in reality much disturbed. He wondered greatly how Underwood had obtained possession of the paper.

"It contains a charge against me which is a lie; and Mrs. Stoddard, whose name appears here, states that she was tricked into signing the document."

"In what way do you connect me with it?" asked Montrose.

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"It is in your handwriting, and the archbishop claims that you have used your prerogative as a confessor to obtain it, and to see that it reached his Grace's hands," was the reply.

Montrose cursed his forgetfulness that had allowed him to leave the paper in the archbishop's possession.

"I do my duty as a confessor and claim no praise for so doing, neither should I suffer reproach," said Montrose.

"That is it exactly," agreed the archbishop. "Underwood, you have had your say, and now I shall proceed as my reason and conscience dictate. Monsignor Montrose, you have suffered indignities this day which are undeserved, and I resent them as insults to me as well as to you, for they have been spoken in my presence. I wish to say that you have lost nothing in my esteem from the attacks made on your honor and integrity."

"But, Archbishop Boylston," interposed Mrs. Stoddard, somewhat timorously, "Monsignor Montrose wrote and signed a document in which he states that he knows nothing against Father Underwood nor me." She keenly felt the injustice of the archbishop's position, which nothing seemed to change.

"I do know nothing against you nor Father Underwood," said Montrose, sententiously.

"I understand you perfectly," said the archbishop, "and I honor your silence. St. John Nepomocene suffered martyrdom rather than betray the secrets intrusted to him in the confessional. There are those who suffer martyrdom in spirit, if not in

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body." The archbishop looked toward Montrose as if including him in the calendar of such martyrs.

"Monsignor Michael Montrose is a treacherous, despicable villain," said Signora Valenti in a voice resonant and strong. "I do not know his reason for wishing to injure Father Underwood. I presume it is because they are opposite in character; that is, one is a good man, the other is not."

"Archbishop," said Montrose, "I have had recently one painful interview with this young woman, and I do not care for another. With your permission, I shall leave the room."

The archbishop hesitated a moment, then replied:

"It is better for us to hear what she has to say, and I can be a witness for you should you suffer annoyance in the future."

"Archbishop," said Montrose, "indeed, I think it better—"

"Wait a little, Monsignor," interrupted his Grace. "It will soon be over."

"Perhaps," remarked Adelina. From her handbag she drew forth a letter and handed it to the archbishop.

"Read this," she said, and tell me if you have ever seen it before."

"Why," said he, looking at the envelope, "it is a letter of mine to Monsignor Montrose, sent from here to Rome, and I see by the postmark on the envelope that it was forwarded to Naples."

He opened the letter and read it carefully.

"It refers to matters of interest," he said, turn-

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ing it slowly in his hands, "and here are marginal notes in the handwriting of the monsignor. I could know his handwriting anywhere. How did this letter come into your possession?" he asked, finally.

"I shall tell you shortly," the signora replied. She took a number of other letters from her handbag and gave them to the archbishop.

"Read these," she said. "Compare the handwriting with that which you say is Monsignor Montrose's, and tell me what you think."

"Your Grace," said Montrose, with feigned indignation, "this is some attempt at blackmail, and I shall not remain here."

The monsignor was but a few feet distant from Signora Valenti, and he could easily recognize the square, upright handwriting as his own. Here were his letters to Adelina, written while passionate love for her was burning in his heart.

"If it is an attempt to blackmail it is better that you remain here and confound it. You may count on my assistance," said the archbishop.

After reading a moment, the bewildered archbishop exclaimed:

"Good heavens, Monsignor! What can this mean?"

He turned from one letter to another, reading the passionate protestations of love for Adelina and the expressions of happy anticipation for the future, when she and the writer would be one before God and the law.

"Monsignor, what can it all mean?" again exclaimed the archbishop. "Am I bereft of my senses?"

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Such unusual language addressed to a female, in your handwriting, is astounding! 'Adelina, my heart, my love, mother-to-be of my child'—Monsignor, say something! Do something! This is surely in your handwriting."

Montrose was greatly astonished at the appearance of letters which he supposed had been destroyed years before. Even now he did not lose self-possession. He remembered that he had not signed the letters with his own name, but as "George Esmond."

"Your Grace," said Montrose. "I declare these letters forgeries. The writing may resemble mine, but it is not mine. If my name is attached to such infamous screeds it is an indictable offense, and I shall take legal procedure in the matter."

The archbishop looked for the signature attached to the letters, and found that the initials "G. E." or the full name, "George Esmond," were subscribed.

"Your name, Monsignor, is not here, but the writing surely is yours. I must say—"

His Grace paused. Perhaps for the first time in his life he doubted the absolute integrity of the monsignor.

"Archbishop," said Montrose, "I never wrote those letters. This is infamous! I sought to do my duty as confessor, painful as such duty was, and this is the result!"

"You are right, Monsignor. You are entitled to every consideration. But see here," pointing to the marginal notes which were on his own letter to Montrose, and then pointing to one of the other letters. "See, the characters are the same, square and up-

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right. See the curves of the capitals, the regular spacings of the words, all are the same."

"They appear to be, but are not. They are forgeries!"

"Madam," said the archbishop, addressing himself to Signora Valenti, "these letters were addressed to you?"

"They were," was the reply.

"These expressions of endearment, and the rest, were directed to you?"

"All of them," replied Adelina.

"How do explain the subscription of the name, 'George Esmond?'"

"By that name he wooed me."

"Wooed you!" exclaimed his Grace. "Of all things! Did you know him to be a priest?"

"Not at first. I supposed him to be a cultivated English gentleman, which part he then looked and dressed to perfection."

"Archbishop, I can not remain and listen to such infamy. I shall leave you, and return when this seance is over," said Montrose, waving his hand towards Adelina and Underwood.

"You would better remain, Monsignor," replied his Grace. "This is inexplicable. I can not understand it."

"Monsignor Michael Montrose declares these letters to be forgeries," interposed Signora Valenti. "I have here statements from two of the most clever handwriting experts in San Francisco, and they both declare that the same man who wrote these love letters wrote the marginal notes on the letter addressed

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to Monsignor Montrose which was subscribed by Archbishop Boylston. Here are the statements. You will notice that they have been sworn to before a notary."

"It is so," said the archbishop, looking over the papers. "Both Blondin and Harper make depositions here. I know these men well and believe them honest, but—" The archbishop broke off, and seemed bewildered. The situation seemed an impossible one to him, and he could not grasp its full significance.

Montrose reached over and took one of the letters signed "George Esmond."

"See," said he, looking it over rapidly, "this speaks of love that is certainly reprehensible. This woman here admits the letters are addressed to her. Can you accept the testimony of such a person? Handwriting experts are often bribed, as we all know. No doubt Blondin and Harper have been tampered with. I can bring experts, I am sure, who will contradict these men and who will do so under oath.

"Archbishop, it is preposterous that I should be annoyed in this manner."

The archbishop accepted the implied suggestion of Montrose and turned to Adelina.

"Who are you, madam, who thus assumes the position of accuser, while these letters show your own past lacks—"

Both Adelina and Father Darsi arose at the same time, but the Jesuit spoke first and interrupted the archbishop.

"I can tell your Grace. This lady is Signora Adelina Valenti, daughter of my half-brother, Giovanni Valenti. On her mother's side she is related to

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the Duke of Palermo. By a collateral line she is connected with the family of the late King Charles Albert of Sardinia.

"You mention certain allusions in those letters to unfortunate circumstances. I deplore them as deeply as can you, or can any one. Adelina is a daughter of New Italy. The reason of this, or in fact the reason that a new Italy exists at all, must be laid largely at the door of such evil men as Montrose. Adelina is a victim rather than a culprit—far more sinned against than sinning."

Montrose arose as if to approach the aged Jesuit. If looks could kill, surely his would have slain Darsi. Underwood also arose and stepped close to the Jesuit.

"Explain yourself, Father Darsi," said the archbishop, whose face seemed to grow old suddenly.

The Jesuit took several documents from his pocket, saying:

"Here are instruments sent to me from our superior general in Rome, who in turn received them from the Jesuit superiors in London, Paris, and elsewhere. Our Father General retained them while Monsignor Montrose remained in Rome. Now that the monsignor is here, the papers have followed him. You will notice that they are stamped with the seal of our various superiors who have procured them, and over all is the great seal of our Father General. You can depend on the veracity and authenticity of these documents."

All present, even Montrose, looked at the Jesuit with the greatest interest. They wondered what next would come. Darsi did not keep them waiting long.

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He read from the papers which gave an account of Montrose's life in the different great cities, when he had laid aside his clerical garb and had given himself to sin and evil.

The papers stated in what manner Montrose had been detected in each instance, and the means that had been used to watch and follow him. There was no account of his life in Naples. In some way he had there escaped notice completely.

The monsignor listened as he would have listened to his doom. All his scheming and turning and doubling had been in vain. When once he learned that the keen eyes of the omnipresent Jesuit Order had been following him, he abandoned hope. His wandering attention returned only to hear Darsi conclude his remarks with:

"You see, your Grace, the Jesuits are not only great soul-savers, but thief-takers as well, for those who would steal souls are thieves."

The archbishop was at last convinced of Montrose's duplicity. Always on the side of right, he did his duty as he knew it to be. Standing erect, he said to Montrose with great dignity:

"Have you anything to say, Monsignor Michael Montrose?"

Montrose looked at the archbishop, then at the company around, while a sneer curled his lips.

"I say," he said in a moment, "that I have more brains than have you all put together, including that babbling fool there," pointing to Darsi; "but I was born under an ill star, and must take kicks and blows from you who should be serving me."

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"What language is this, fallen man!" said the archbishop, sternly.

"Language I employ to those whom I would have used as stepping-stones to reach the goal to which my ambition points."

"And you," he said, turning to Underwood, "I despise you, and hate your lily-white virtues and your petty, sordid, contemptible life."

Fire darted from Underwood's eyes, but he made no move. The archbishop said quickly:

"Michael Montrose, is this charge false which you have been instrumental in bringing against Father Underwood?"

"It is a piece of nonsense, as any one with any brains at all could see."

"Why did you bring the paper to me?" asked the archbishop.

Montrose gave a grating laugh. He did not answer the question, but said:

"I know now why Cardinal Sanchez held me back from promotion, and why I received no hearing in Rome. I see it all now. The Jesuits were back of it."

"It is enough!" said the archbishop. "Michael Montrose, I depose you from the priesthood, and deprive you of all the ecclesiastical honors which have been conferred on you."

"I command that you retire to the Benedictine Monastery at Mt. Angel, Oregon, and there remain, at my pleasure, doing penance in sackcloth and ashes for your foul sins committed against God and His Church. I direct that your food and drink be bread

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and water, and only in quantities sufficient to sustain life. I recommend that you distribute your goods to the poor—”

“I am not a fool, as you seem to think,” Montrose interrupted. Again he laughed gratingly. “I shall retain my fortune, and eat, drink, and wear what I please. I shall order my life as I see fit, and I do not intend to turn my steps to Mt. Angel, Oregon.”

Suddenly Montrose turned to Signora Valenti.

“How did you come into possession of the archbishop’s letter to me?” he asked her, fiercely.

“I do not feel bound to enlighten you, yet from the goodness of my heart I shall do so,” said Adelina, a peculiar smile showing on her face. “In my house in Naples you broke open my desk and took thence a package of letters. You had just placed them in the breast-pocket of your coat when I entered the room. I caught them from you, and you roughly deprived me of them. The archbishop’s letter to you was with the others in your pocket. This letter remained in my hand after you had torn the others from me and had struck me to the floor. I learned your real name and your Roman address from the envelope.

“I went to Rome the night you left me, and I lived in the Via Spicciata until you returned to your rooms in that street. I knew you then for the scoundrel that you are. I have not forgotten you since, as you may see. Does this satisfy you? Are you enlightened now, Monsignor Michael Montrose?”

A sudden paroxysm of rage overcame Montrose. He started towards Adelina as if to strike her.

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Quick as a flash she drew a small revolver from her dress and pointed it at his face. Fear showed in his eyes where anger had dominated a moment before. He stepped back, and said in a choked voice:

“Don’t! Don’t!”

“You see I have prepared myself for you, Monsignor Michael Montrose. The man who has once struck down a woman might do so again,” said Adelina, replacing her revolver in her dress.

The archbishop turned to Father Underwood, and said:

“Father Underwood, I hereby appoint you irremovable rector of St. Carmel’s Church, in place of Monsignor Montrose, removed. I dispense with all examination, owing to your unusual fitness. I shall at once write your appointment in proper form and send it to you.”

Underwood did not reply.

“I think and act only for the good of Holy Church,” continued the archbishop. “Therefore do I this day depose Monsignor Montrose, and I ask pardon of you, Father Underwood, for my injustice to you.”

The archbishop then addressed Montrose, pointing to the door:

“Go, Judas! Go to your doom!”

Composure had returned to the monsignor. Slowly he looked over the company, his eyes finally resting on Adelina.

“Curse you!” he said. “Curse you!”

With these words he opened the door and was gone.

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“Father Darsi,” said the archbishop, “you have had those documents in your possession for some time. Why did you not come to me with them before?”

The Jesuit bowed to his Grace.

“Permit me to say,” he replied, “that Monsignor Montrose is subject to your jurisdiction, not to that of the Jesuit Order. Moreover, you have the same means to watch and discover that we have.”

“But Montrose was in a foreign land. How could I have supervision over him,” returned the archbishop.

The Jesuit bowed again.

“All the more reason why you should have kept him here in your own diocese, under your eyes, where his duty was.”

“However, you showed the papers at last. Why did you not do so earlier?”

“I wished to prevent possible disaster to my friend Underwood. When it seemed necessary to that end to show my papers, I did so; but I am not prosecuting attorney at your court, neither do I expect you to be such at mine. Our departments are entirely different and distinct, as you well know.”

Father Darsi, as he spoke, yet again bowed low to the archbishop, but with a peculiar dignity of manner. He evidently wished to close the question.

“Father Underwood,” said the archbishop, “this afternoon I received by express from Rome an encyclical beginning with the words, ‘*Pascendi gregis dominici.*’ Will you kindly translate it from its Latin, and, as soon as you can, return me both the original and the translation?”

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"I shall be pleased to do so, Archbishop," replied Underwood.

"I do not know its contents," his Grace continued. "You will find it interesting if it touches on those vexed questions which for so long have occupied you."

"Now, my friends," the archbishop said, finally, "we have concluded our deliberations, and I bid you good afternoon."

With great courtesy he ushered them to the front door, and paused on the threshold for a moment, watching their entrance to the automobile. He re-entered his office and stood looking absently around him. Perhaps with his mind's eye he saw shattered an idol which he had revered for twenty years. He went to his desk, took a blank form thence, and rapidly filled it out. He placed it in an envelope which he addressed to Father Underwood. It contained that priest's formal appointment as irremovable rector of the great parish of St. Carmel. He called a servant and instructed him to carry it to the post-box on the corner.

The archbishop opened the Venetian blinds which shaded his window. The descending sun of the glorious California early summer came streaming in. His Grace saw it not, neither did he see the grass-clad hills in the distance, for he looked not without, but within. When he sat in his chair, bathed in the resplendent yellow light, he appeared bent and broken.

It was a sad hour for the Archbishop of San Francisco.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Old, Old Story.

FRONTING on San Leandro Bay was a great, rambling, delightful adobe house, built a century before by one of the Spanish land barons. Its walls were at least three feet in thickness, and the roof was of clay tiles burned to a brick-red. It was cool in summer, and comparatively warm in winter.

The rooms were many; some large, some small. There were surprises everywhere in the corners and nooks, which offered nothing, apparently, yet often afforded the explorer an entrance into a hall where the trophies of the chase had been kept, or into the armory, where a number of old-fashioned muskets were standing in their racks.

In the large yard in front were gnarled old olive trees which had been planted in the days when the King of Spain was still lord of Alta California, and the padres were its spiritual rulers. A trellis work ran through this yard. Its timbers were of redwood brought from Grizzly Peak long years before, and hewn by axes wielded by the docile hands of the Indian neophytes.

The branches and foliage of the mission grapevines had covered the trellis and had intertwined with one another till there was no space where the sun's rays could penetrate.

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This trellis walk was famous in the early traditions. Don Luis Castro had brought his bride that way in the long ago when she came with him from old Spain. Her father and his had been friends, and they had pledged their children to each other.

Don Luis's father had died soon after the building of the great adobe mansion; but he had told his son, just then of age, of the compact made and of the beautiful lady in Andalusia who was his promised bride.

Don Luis made the long, tedious journey to Spain and found the daughter of his father's friend. It was love at first sight, so the story goes.

He brought the bride to his California hacienda. As they rode together along the trellis walk to the great front door of the mansion, the Spanish girl looked somewhat in wonder at the dark-skinned Indians who lined the trellis walls and made low obeisance to her.

"These are your servants, madam, your slaves," her husband had said.

"They shall be my friends," she rejoined, and kissed her finger tips in return to the salutations of the aborigines. Then she turned on the front steps of the great house and looked lovingly at her husband.

"I hope, dear heart, you will be happy here with me," he said.

"I should be happy anywhere with you," she replied, smiling back at him.

She looked at the glistening waters of the bay and the splendid green fields reaching down to the water. The major domo of the hacienda had mar-

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shaded all the Indians in regular lines before her, and they waved their hands gracefully over their heads, shouting, "Viva! Viva!"

More than fifty years later the same scene was enacted before her when her grandson, Don Miguel Castro, brought home his bride from Santa Barbara. The young couple had dismounted at the foot of the steps leading to the house, and "La Señora" had descended to meet them. They knelt before her, and she blessed them. Together the young couple and the aged lady mounted the steps. At the top she looked once more at the beautiful scenery before her, then at the shouting, gesticulating Indians.

"My children," she said, "I gave you my blessing a moment ago. I now give you as well all that which is here," waving her hand toward the vast domain stretching before them. Then she went within. A week later her body was carried to the old cemetery at Mission San Jose, and she was laid with her husband, Don Luis. Their own son had died in Mexico, whither he had journeyed to wed the daughter of a noble family. He was to remain one year in Mexico after the marriage, and then bring his wife to California. Before the year had elapsed the young man died, and the same vessel which brought notice of his death to his parents brought also notice of the birth of his son. Don Luis and his wife journeyed to Mexico, and found that their son's wife had also died, the dreaded pernicious fever having taken her away, leaving to their care her child.

Little Miguel was brought to California to grow up as the son of Don and Doña Luis Castro.

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Señor Castro was killed a few years later in a battle with renegade Indians who had been stealing cattle and murdering the vaqueros.

Señora Castro seemed only to live for her little grandson, Miguel. In him she saw her husband and her son again. After Miguel's marriage she was content to leave him secure in the affection of his wife, and she went to join her loved ones who had gone on before.

Long years passed on, and with it all the old Spanish civilization. Naught remained but the great adobe mansion and the old trees and grapevines.

From the house back to the rolling foot-hills were rows on rows of cherry-trees, filled now with luscious purple fruit. On either side of the house were also some cherry trees much older than the others, as their greater size showed. Their fruit was of a darker hue than the others, and was larger.

Out of the great front door and down the old front steps came a young girl. She walked along the covered trellis way, and then over to the large cherry trees. No daughter of Andalusia was she. Her hair was fair, and her eyes hazel. From her lips fell the words of an English song.

She seemed impatient. She dug the toes of her dainty boot into the well-tilled soil and seemed almost ready to pout.

A moment later she saw a horseman rapidly approaching on the foot-hill road. A graceful rider was he, not gripping the horse's body with his knees, but balancing himself on the animal's back, in the true Mexican fashion. As he drew nearer one could

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see how symmetrically the motions of his body coincided with the cantering of the horse.

He drew rein before the young girl. "O Constance," he began, "I know where"—when she interrupted him with an imperious "Sh-h-h-h, not so loud. No one is to know you call on me by that name until—well, not even have I told it to mamma," she concluded in a half-awed whisper.

"Very well," said the young fellow, as he sprang from his horse to the ground. "I've just reined in my horse, and I shall rein in my voice. I'll call you 'Constance' now, if you don't mind. I was about to say that I know where there are cherries riper and sweeter and more beautiful than any of these," pointing to the bountifully laden trees.

"No flattery from you, sir," she returned, stamping her foot at him, but inwardly pleased. "I allow you to kiss me only in the presence of mother, and then only on the cheek."

Again she assumed an imperious manner, and demanded:

"What do you mean by being late, Don Underwood?"

"Late, Constance! What do you mean?" asked the boy, in open-eyed wonder. "I was to be here at four o'clock this afternoon, and it lacks a quarter of an hour of that time. I had my horse all saddled and ready at the university grounds, and as soon as the lecture was finished I came here post-haste."

"I'll have you understand, Don, that an appointment with me at four o'clock means half-past three at the very latest."

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Don's merry laugh followed this speech, and after a moment the girl's merriment joined his.

A very pretty picture the couple made as they stood together among the large cherry trees. Tall and fair-haired and strong they were, these children of Anglo-Saxon forbears who in a half dozen generations had conquered the wilderness from the Atlantic to the Pacific and had planted the greatest civilization the world knew.

"Why, Don, here already?" called the clear, mellow voice of a woman, and the young couple saw the speaker tripping quickly down the steps and walking towards them. Handsome she was, as well as energetic and strong, a typical American woman. A sister to the girl under the cherry-trees, one would say at first sight, but it was not so. They were mother and daughter. The girl at fifteen seemed older than her years; the mother at thirty-five seemed younger.

"Yes, Mrs. van Allston, I'm here; and are you not glad to see me?" replied Don.

"Yes, indeed, I am, and always glad to see you. You are not alone, either, I see," returned the lady, laughing.

The young girl's face colored slightly.

"Mother," said she, "I declare—"

"Will you do an errand for me, Don?" the mother interrupted.

"At your service, as ever," said the boy.

"I would like you to go to the cabin of the old Indian woman, Marta. You know, of course, where she lives—down near the San Lorenzo. She makes

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a number of herb remedies, among others a liniment that often proves useful in rheumatic cases. Our gardener, Manuel, is a martyr to rheumatism, and has not been able to leave his bed to-day. He says Marta's liniment always helps him; but there was no one to send who could make Marta understand what is wanted, as she speaks Spanish only. You understand that language, do you not, Don?"

"Yes, Mrs. van Allston," said Don. "I know some Spanish and shall be pleased to go."

"Capital idea!" said the girl. "I'll go, too, and keep you company. Where did you learn Spanish, Don?"

"You forget that I am a native of these parts, and in my more youthful days I associated freely with my Latin neighbors."

"And in your maturer years you are using the knowledge thus gained," said Mrs. van Allston, laughing again. "Now, take your horse around to the hostler, and then you two scamper over the fields to old Marta's. Do not keep Manuel waiting for the liniment longer than you can help."

Don caught his horse, which had been wandering about, feeding on the late grass. He held the stirrup for the girl, who mounted, sitting sidewise in the saddle. She was an excellent horsewoman and, though Don led the horse by the bridle and ran as fast as he could, she held her seat unconcerned and called to him to hasten lest Manuel suffer too long for lack of the liniment.

Soon they left the horse in the barn and hastened across country to the bank of the small river, called

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Arroyo San Lorenzo. It was on the property owned by Colonel van Allston.

A number of Indian cabins were scattered about, but the colonel had given orders that the occupants must not be disturbed. He wished such labor to be given them as they could do, and that none of them should suffer want. This much at least was due to the aborigines of the country.

The two young people found Marta at home. She had never learned English, had forgotten the Indian tongue of her youth, and now knew Spanish only, which, however, she was able to read and write. Don briefly made known to her the purpose of the visit. The woman was very old and bent, her face much wrinkled, but the black eyes were bright and intelligent.

"Who are you?" she asked. "Who comes to me with the tongue of the Spaniard, yet who has the face and skin of the gringo?"

"My name is Underwood," said the boy. "I was born not far from here. Many of the children I used to meet were Spanish, and from them I learned to speak their language."

"In the old, old long ago there came one like you to this country. He was a little older than you, perhaps; but I think little of years, I have seen so many," crooned the ancient woman.

"What is she saying, Don?" asked the girl. "Do tell her to hasten with Manuel's liniment."

"She is asking me many things, and is just beginning to tell me a story, I think. I'll hurry her up about the liniment, if I can."

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Marta, when admonished, took down some dried herbs from bundles that were hanging from the ceiling and began grinding them in a mortar with a pestle. Occasionally she poured in a little water, then a little more, until the mass began to assume a liquid appearance. All the time she was speaking rapidly.

"The gringo came in one of the great ships that sail on the sea. I have seen ships. They are like birds with great white wings. I have seen the sea, also. It is blue and restless, and always moaning. It is years, however, since I have left this river.

"Well, the stranger came to our country here. At first he spoke no language that we could understand, but soon he learned some Spanish. He was fair-haired and tall and strong, like yourself. Soon he loved the daughter of one of our dons, and she loved him. Her father gave consent to the marriage; but the padre said: 'No. This man is a heretic in religion and must never wed a daughter of the true faith. He must see the error of his religion and join the true Church before he marries her.' The head padre at San Luis Rey said the same."

"Don, what can she be saying?" asked the girl. "I've never felt so stupid in my life, sitting here listening to all this talk when I can not understand a word."

"She is telling me a story," said Don. "I'll tell it to you when she finishes."

Marta went on:

"The gringo went to the great sea, where many ships are from his own land. One of the ships had a padre, too—not like ours, though I never knew

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what the difference was. This padre spoke much of God and Christ and right living, so it was said, but spoke not of the Virgin Mary.

“The gringo had speech with this padre and with many others there, and the matter was arranged.

“One night the senorita disappeared from her father’s house. She had gone with her lover to the sea, where the great ships were. Afterwards we heard all about it. The senorita and the gringo and many of his friends, with the strange padre, had taken a smaller ship and had sailed out to the deep sea, until land was almost beyond sight. Then the foreign padre married the couple, just as our own padres do in church.

“At once they returned and went to the old don, the father of the senorita, and asked his blessing. In great wonder he asked them what they had done, and they told him. He was angry, for he thought they had done very wrong. He took them to our padre, who said little when he heard of the marriage at sea. The head padre was visiting our mission then, and the old don went to him and told him what had been done. The head padre also had little to say.

“The don was much surprised and went to the governor, Señor Alvarado. When he heard all, he told the don that the great sea did not belong to Spain nor to the Province of California, but was the property of all nations; and therefore the marriage was right. At least that is how I heard it.

“The gringo and his bride came to the home of the old don, and there was much feasting and dancing. Our padre said never a word. The gringo lived

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in this valley the remainder of his life. He learned to speak Spanish as we do, and so you remind me of him because you are tall and fair, yet have the Spaniard's tongue.

"I was but a little girl when this marriage occurred, but it seems as yesterday to me. I have never understood why the marriage, which could not be here on land, was right when out at sea, even with the gringo padre. But then, I know so little. Still I have lived long and have seen much.

"Foreign boy, I saw that gringo grow old and I saw his funeral, saw his children and his grandchildren die when they were old, yet am I here. A hundred winters have come and gone since first I knew of this story which I have told you, still am I here. I know the virtues of the herbs which grow along this river bank—long years have taught me that; but I have never understood about the gringo's marriage."

"Don Underwood, I say," said the girl, "of all things, what in the world has Marta been telling you? I never knew her tongue to be so nimble, and her eyes were positively sparkling. You seemed possessed by her talk. You never even looked at me once."

"I thought of you often, Constance," the boy said. "I'll tell you all about it on our way home."

The Indian woman left her seat and made her way over to a shelf, whence she took a large bottle, into which she poured the contents of the mortar. The herbs, pounded fine and mixed with water, had become like a thick syrup. While she was putting

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the mixture into the bottle she crooned a song in words unintelligible to Don.

"I have forgotten the meaning of what I sing," she said. "I remember only the words as I heard my mother sing them. They are soft, not harsh and rough like the strange words in which the beautiful *senorita* speaks to you. What a pity she does not know Spanish! Yet love needs no words in which to speak." The old woman looked keenly at the two and gave a strange, cackling, but not unkind, laugh.

"Donald Underwood," said the girl, imperiously, "I now she is talking about me, and you are helping her. I demand that you tell me, and I insist that you come home this minute."

"I'll come right away, and I'll tell you what she said," the boy answered.

He offered some money to the woman, which she refused to take.

"God gives the herbs free, and the years have given me knowledge. Wherefore should I ask money for the liniment? Besides, I am greatly in debt to the grand *doña* at the hacienda," she said, pointing to her larder which Mrs. van Allston had supplied bounteously.

The boy and girl hastened along the byway which led to the hacienda. He went quickly over the story which old Marta had told him.

"How romantic!" commented the girl. "Just think! all these wonderful things have happened right here, and no one would ever suspect it unless Marta told him. I wonder if there will be any more romances in the world so interesting as this one."

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Just then they reached the brow of a hill which commanded a view of that part of the valley.

"Do you see that row of tall trees there, Constance?" Don asked.

"Yes," was the reply.

"They mark the line where your father's property meets that of my father, or rather of my father's estate."

"I know, Don," said the girl. "I have heard father tell about it time and time again. Our fathers first saw this valley here shortly after the close of the war with Mexico. They thought it the most beautiful place they had ever seen. They then and there determined to buy a part of it some time, and live on it and improve it. After a long while they did buy property here, and they improved it, but have never dwelt on it. Your father is not with you any more, and mine is simply too busy to come here, though he is always talking of so doing. He bought the old house and the farm from the last descendant of the Castros. Then the great cherry orchard was planted and the house put in good repair. Mother and I have intended to spend a part of each year here, but this is our first visit. Father certainly intended to come this spring, but now he writes that he can not. It is always business, business, business."

The girl paused a moment, then resumed:

"I wish, Don, that you had continued at Harvard instead of coming to Berkeley. We used to have such good times together, you and I, around old Boston."

"Yes, we did; but my father's estate required my

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presence in California; so I came. I shall complete in Berkeley the course I began at Harvard."

"Mother and I go East soon, you know, and then to Europe for a long time. I wish you were coming, Don."

The boy and girl looked at each other wistfully after this remark. They went along the road and neither spoke for a while. At last Don broke the silence:

"Constance," he said, "I'm going to ask your mother to-day for permission to marry you."

"Why, Don!" exclaimed the girl. "Mother and father have often said that we can marry, if we wish, when we are old enough. You don't need any further permission. What can you be thinking of?"

"I mean to marry you now, before you go away," said the boy.

"Donald Underwood!" exclaimed the girl. "Would you ask mother that, really?" Respect and admiration showed in her eyes as she looked at him.

"Yes," said he, passionately, "I will ask your mother's permission to marry you, and if she is willing I shall speak to my aunt about it."

"O, Miss Donsett?" said the girl.

"She is my guardian, you know, and trustee, with your father, over my property," he replied.

"Yes, I know; but she will not give her consent. She is such a strict Catholic that she would insist that you marry a Catholic girl."

"Well, she is strange," said Donald, ruefully. "She is my father's half-sister, but not in the least like him. However, if your mother consents to our

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marriage now, I am determined that my aunt shall do likewise."

"I am ready, Don," said the girl. In that moment she felt herself to be a woman and fitted to meet the demands of that estate. Of the future she recked as little as did the boy. Older and wiser people than they have not done otherwise.

They carried the liniment to Manuel, the gardener, and then entered the house together. Mrs. van Allston was in her sitting-room reading. She looked up as the two came in and stood before her. The solemn faces of the pair attracted her notice. For the first time she perceived how nearly her daughter was approaching mature womanhood. She waited a moment for one or the other to speak; then, as they did not, she began:

"Don, you and Marguerite—" when the boy interrupted her with the words:

"Mrs. van Allston, I wish to marry your daughter."

Mrs. van Allston arose and stood by Don's side. She then placed her hands on his shoulders for a moment and looked tenderly up at him.

"Don," she replied, "it is the dearest wish of Colonel van Allston, as it is mine, that you and my daughter marry if, when you are both old enough, you love each other and wish to marry. In such case my husband and I would give our blessing as well as permission. It will all rest with you two."

"I want to marry Marguerite now," said Don, firmly.

"Why, Donald Underwood!" said the lady, with

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a laugh. "You are scarcely eighteen, while Marguerite is three years younger. You have two years more before your graduation at the university, and then comes the professional career to which you look forward. Marguerite will spend the next three years abroad with me, finishing her education; or, I might say, beginning her education. My husband and I could not give our consent to the marriage of you two children at this time; and it requires no prophet to predict what your aunt, Miss Donsett, would say."

"Yes," replied Don, "you will take Marguerite away to Europe and she will forget me and we can never marry. I want to marry her now."

"Yes," interposed the girl, "and I want to marry Don now."

"Well, whoever!" exclaimed the mother, in an almost vexed tone. "You two run along together and allow me to finish this book. Forget all thoughts of marriage for the present. Remember, I have listened to the last word from either of you on the subject of which you have been speaking. I suppose old Marta has been telling you some of her famous love stories, and they have given you ideas. Goodness! when you children came in, looking so much in earnest, I surely thought something serious was in the air."

Mrs. van Allston had remained standing during the entire conversation. She now resumed her chair and busied herself with her book. The boy and girl understood that she had given them her final decision.

The two went out and seated themselves on a long

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settee which was under a low veranda that ran along one side of the house. The girl was first to speak.

"Your aunt would never give her consent to our marriage. She wants you to be a priest, you know."

"It would be a fine thing to be a priest and care for the lepers as Father Damien did; but I want to marry you," said the boy. "Besides, Mr. Osmond over in Castro Valley is married, yet he preaches and does no end of good. He even takes poor people into his own home and cares for them, though he is poor enough himself, and his own family is large enough to fill his small house. I could be a minister like Osmond, but I intend to study law when I finish at Berkeley. I prefer being a lawyer to anything else."

"Splendid, Don!" said the girl. "I like your being a lawyer, too. But it will take so long!"

"Yes," answered Donald. "If we were only married I should feel better about it all."

"I agree with you, Don," the girl said. "You were speaking of Mr. Osmond, the minister in Castro Valley. Well, I've not told you that Miss Donsett called on mother about him the other day. Your aunt was furious because you and mother had paid the mortgage on his little farm. As Miss Donsett held the mortgage, she had hoped that she would have opportunity to turn the Osmonds out, because Mr. Osmond took in the orphan or abandoned children and made Protestants of those who were not so already."

"Yes," added Don, "Mr. Osmond takes in poor Mexican- and Portuguese-children and cares for them

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in his little place when no one else will. He teaches them his own religion, of course. He could n't be expected to teach them a religion he does n't know anything about himself."

"Well, anyway, she was furious. She drove out here and called on mother. She commenced to complain about interference and all that, when mother just looked at her—well, as she looked at us a while ago—and Miss Donsett hardly said another word about the Osmond affair. Mother can quell anybody when she wants to, though she hardly ever wants to. That is, anybody except father. No one can quell him when he wants to do anything. He is so—O, so big!"

"Yes, my aunt was much vexed with your mother and me over our paying the mortgage."

After a moment Donald said, abruptly: "Constance, I have an idea. It started coming while old Marta was telling the story of the early Castros. Mr. Osmond will have a part, too."

He unfolded his plan to the girl. She listened in open-eyed wonder. His idea was to secure the services of the minister, Mr. Osmond; have him accompany them to the San Francisco harbor. A boat was to be procured there, and all three would sail out on the high seas, miles away from land, and there the marriage ceremony was to take place. Then, though continents and oceans separate them, the boy and girl would be husband and wife, and they would be sure to be united in the years to come.

Fortune seemed to favor the young pair. Donald rode over and saw Mr. Osmond that evening. At first

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the minister positively refused to officiate at the marriage, but finally consented. Donald had told him that it was all to insure a future union.

Mrs. van Allston announced that evening her intention to pass the following day in San Jose. She would leave the hacienda early and return late.

"You and Don are to be in charge here to-morrow," she said to her daughter. "I have given the housekeeper full directions as to the meals and so forth, so you will be sure of a good dinner."

The boy and girl and the minister went to San Francisco the next forenoon. Donald was well supplied with money, and he had no difficulty in hiring a tug-boat, with the necessary crew. They sailed out through Golden Gate, towards the land of the setting sun. Oftentimes in years far in the future Father Donald Underwood stood on Point Lobos hill, overlooking sea and harbor, while his soul longed for a vision of God, and his heart hungered for the human love he believed was lost forever to him.

When the line of the San Francisco shore was dimming and the Farallones in plain sight, the captain turned the head of the boat to the wind.

In the presence of the boat crew the minister pronounced the words which made the boy and girl husband and wife.

The return trip was made quickly. When the wharf was reached the minister made out two marriage certificates and signed them. To each he gave one.

"Keep these carefully, my children," he had said as he left them.

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That evening Mrs. van Allston was again in her sitting-room, and the boy and girl were before her. The three had met in the hall, as they returned from their respective journeys. Don had asked for an immediate interview.

"Of all things, Don Underwood!" the lady exclaimed. "What can be the matter now! I have just reached home from a long ride, and have not even changed my dress. What is it? Another story of old Marta's?"

"This is a story of to-day, Mrs. van Allston," he replied. "Your daughter and I were married this afternoon in a tug-boat, midway between the Golden Gate and the Farallones. Here are the marriage certificates signed by Mr. Osmond."

Mrs. van Allston arose and approached them. She read the marriage certificates, and then, dumb-founded, repeated her words of the day before:

"Well, of all things!" Then she said, severely, "Donald, what does this mean?" To her daughter she said:

"What explanation have *you* to make?"

Donald put his arm around the girl-bride and said: "I make the explanation for her. I am her husband."

"Donald, what does this mean?" the lady asked again.

"It means that we are husband and wife. Though you take your daughter away for three years or more to Europe, or elsewhere, as is your plan, yet one day we are sure to be reunited," replied Don.

"Donald Underwood, who would have thought

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such a thing of you!" said Mrs. van Allston. She was incapable of further comment. In her heart there was great tenderness for the lad. Perhaps she could not help feeling admiration for his spirit.

"I shall acquaint my husband at once with what you have told me," she said, finally.

In a short time the wires were busy carrying a long message in cipher from Mrs. van Allston to her husband. He was sitting in his private office in a building in Wall Street when the message came. It was already dark in California when Mrs. van Allston had wired him, but before midnight had come in New York, Colonel van Allston was speeding West on a private train which bore him with the swiftness of the wind towards San Francisco. All the tracks ahead were cleared for the train of the New York finance magnate. The reporters stormed the train when it stopped, and the newspapers conjectured what this unexpected journey could mean. No one knew the truth.

On the fourth evening after leaving New York, Colonel van Allston sat in his wife's sitting-room in the old hacienda house in California. He had made the record run for a trans-continental trip.

The colonel's wife and daughter were in the room with him. They were awaiting the coming of Donald Underwood, who had been summoned from his aunt's home in Berkeley.

Donald came directly into the room on his arrival, and stood before the colonel. The girl gave a low cry and ran toward him. He placed his arm around her and drew her to him. The father arose and

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walked to the boy and girl. He was a man of herculean proportions, gray-haired, and gray-mustached. Mrs. van Allston also arose, putting her hand on her husband's shoulder as if in alarm, and said:

"Richard, they are but children."

The New York magnate took the youth's hand in his mighty grasp and said, "Don!" The man's eyes were moist and his voice husky.

"Don," said he, when all had been seated, "I've been doing a deal of thinking since I received my wife's telegram informing me of this tug-boat affair. In the first hours of my journey I had hard and bitter feelings towards the man who had led my young daughter into a clandestine marriage. But after a while my thoughts rested on my old friend, your father, my room-mate at West Point, my comrade in the Mexican War, my companion in the California mining days, my comrade again in the Civil War. I loved your father as a brother.

"When you stood in the doorway a moment ago you called to my mind the memory of my friend as he was well-nigh half a century ago. I have often seen on his face the look which a moment ago showed on yours. My heart melted within me as I saw you enter."

"I know the affection and esteem my father had for you, Colonel. He never tired telling of the old days and of your trials and adventures," said Don.

"Old Don Underwood was a man, every inch of him," said the colonel.

"As you entered just now you brought back to my

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mind an occurrence of many, many years ago. It was in our first year at West Point. A bully, a fourth-year man, had insulted one of the first-year men, a comparatively small man. The bully was almost a giant. Your father took sides with the small man, and in response to a gross insult slapped the bully in the mouth with his open hand. I can to this day hear the resounding smack.

"In those times there was a roughness tolerated in West Point which would not be allowed now. That evening the bully and your father, with a few friends who were in the secret, went to a retired corner of the grounds. It was to be a fight to the finish, with bare knuckles, no quarter given nor expected."

The old warrior paused for a moment, his thoughts busy. Soon he resumed:

"I can see your father standing there, stripped to the waist, looking so cool and determined.

"Well, the fight went on. Rexford, the bully, was five years the elder, and much heavier and stronger. I can still see that fight, see your father repel the furious rushes of the bully, round after round. Finally Rexford fell from exhaustion. I helped your father back towards our room. He fainted before we had gone twenty yards. I carried him to his bed and cared for him till he was well. Pluck and intelligence are superior to brute strength."

"What a terrible affair!" said Mrs. van Allston. "Did the authorities make no investigation?"

"Terrible, yes, my dear," said the colonel; "terrible in one way, but magnificent that old Don was able to punish an insufferable bully in the only avail-

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able way. Yes, there was an investigation, but only a perfunctory one. It amounted to nothing.

"Rexford was with us in the war with Mexico. In the Civil War he was on the other side. I was with Sheridan when we drove General Rexford's division helter-skelter across more than thirty miles of broken country. Through our field glasses we could see him try, time and time again, to rally his men and bring them to face us. He was a brave man, even though he had been a bully."

"Now, my boy," said he to Don, "go on with your work at the university. When you are twenty-one my daughter will be eighteen; we'll come to this old house and have a glorious celebration of this wedding—a little deferred, but we'll celebrate just the same. Keep the marriage quiet till then. What do you say, my boy?"

"I am agreed," said Don, looking at his girl-wife.

"Father, you are a great big darling!" exclaimed the girl.

"To-morrow I'll spend looking over the property here, and to-morrow evening we will start back to New York in my private car. My wife and daughter will go to Europe almost immediately. In three years we'll all meet again in this house."

It was a vain prophecy. Neither the colonel, nor his wife, nor his daughter saw the house again after they left it on the following day. In a few years the property was sold, the house was razed, and modern houses were built on its site. That part of the country became a suburb of the great city on the harbor.

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About a month after Colonel van Allston's return to New York he was stricken with illness and, full of honors, passed to his reward. The bereaved wife and daughter shortly afterward sailed to Europe.

In London they found a letter from Berkeley, California, in Miss Donsett's well-known handwriting. She stated that her nephew had died of pneumonia after a short illness, and requested that all further communication cease between the families.

The mother and daughter, benumbed by this second blow, hastened to the continent, where they lived in retirement for several years.

About the time that Mrs. van Allston and her daughter received the letter from Miss Donsett, another letter reached Donald from New York. It was typewritten, but signed by Mrs. van Allston, apparently. It conveyed the news that the girl-bride had died suddenly, soon after the demise of her father. The greatest kindness and tenderness was expressed for Donald, but the request was made that all further correspondence cease between him and the writer. Otherwise, the letter said, wounds would be kept open which must be left to time to heal. So it was better that they do not meet again, nor have communication of any sort.

Thus Donald Underwood and his girl-wife each believed the other dead. The youth's life was immeasurably saddened. As soon as he could bring himself to the task he set about his work in the university.

In direct opposition to every previous plan of his life, his whole career became changed. After gradu-

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ating at the university he studied in various Catholic theological seminaries, and later was admitted to priest's orders.

Time passed on. He had been ten years pro-rector of St. Carmel, and seventeen years had elapsed since he and his girl-bride had parted, when the veil of the past was lifted. One evening she came, she whom he had thought to be long since with the angels, and he spoke to her the name "Constance," and looked on her as one returned from another world.

Many explanations were given and received in that hour in the reception-room of St. Carmel's house. Fate had indeed played strangely with the pair. In the years that had gone their paths had crossed and recrossed. They had lived for two years at the same time in Washington, D. C., and had frequented the great public gatherings there. Yet they had never met.

Marguerite—or "Constance," as she was affectionately called by Donald—was now on a visit to San Francisco with her mother, and was preparing an article for publication which touched on Catholic faith or practice. She inquired the location of a Catholic clergy-house, that she might obtain from there some necessary information. It so chanced that she was directed to St. Carmel's; and the husband and wife, who had parted as boy and girl, were now brought together as mature man and woman.

As soon as they discovered that deception had been practiced on them they knew that Miss Donsett was the author. Her letter to Mrs. van Allston was sufficient evidence. When taxed with it, Miss Donsett

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admitted to Underwood that she had written the letter to Mrs. van Allston stating that her nephew Donald had died, and that she desired no further communication with the van Allstons. She had also typewritten the letter purporting to come from Mrs. van Allston to Donald, and she had subscribed that lady's name so cleverly that even Donald suspected nothing. This letter she had sent to a friend of hers in New York, who had posted it there.

Miss Donsett expressed no regret nor sorrow for her act. Her explanation was that she wished her nephew to become a priest, and she believed that he would do so if he thought Marguerite dead. Her hopes had been realized. She told him that she would disinherit him if he left the priesthood to live with his wife. Underwood left his aunt and did not again cross the threshold of her house.

According to Roman Catholic canons Underwood's first duty was to his wife, not to the Church, for the sacrament of marriage had preceded that of holy orders. He might at any time have retired from the priesthood and have lived in marital union as a layman. Had his wife wished to claim him, even if he had been a bishop, he would have been obliged to retire from that dignity, take up all marital relations, and live as a layman in the Catholic communion, with all the privileges of any Catholic layman; and his standing in the Church would in no wise be impaired by the fact that he had retired from the priesthood.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Underneath are the Everlasting Arms.

FATHER UNDERWOOD, after he had left the house of Archbishop Boylston, spent the whole night in reading and studying the papal encyclical "*Pascendi gregis.*" He was looking for a reply from the authorities in Rome regarding his own conclusions in matters philosophical, theological, and historical.

He found in the encyclical a direct condemnation of the views which were the children of his brain and heart.

The encyclical declared that agnosticism was the philosophical foundation of a religious system which Underwood knew to be his own. It insisted that the modern critical methods of historical study led to a deformation of religious history. It entirely condemned as un-Catholic the theory of the evolution of Christian teaching which Underwood believed to have been demonstrated in his own religious experience. It stated finally that the methods and views, such as those to which Underwood adhered, were the synthesis of all heresies.

Father Underwood felt that he no longer had place in the Catholic communion, either as priest or layman. He wrote to Archbishop Boylston his resignation from the priesthood, also his withdrawal from

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the Catholic Church, giving his reasons therefor. Then he set about making preparations for leaving St. Carmel's.

The letter-carrier brought the early mail, in which was the letter from Archbishop Boylston appointing him permanent rector of St. Carmel. Underwood added a postscript to his letter to the archbishop, thanking him for the honor, and stating that, of course, his acceptance thereof was an impossibility.

Thus was closed one epoch in Underwood's life.

He went to his wife and repeated to her the story of his contest against injustice, the treachery of Montrose, of the generosity of Signora Valenti, the goodness of the Jesuit Darsi, and the outcome of the unpleasant episodes. He concluded with the account of the encyclical, its condemnations, and his withdrawal from the priesthood and from the Catholic Church.

"Constance," said he, "when first we met in St. Carmel's house, after our long years of separation, I wished to fulfill the promises I had made to you on the tug-boat long ago. You spoke of my career, of my duty to the people, of the time that I had spent in preparation for my work, and of the great usefulness of that work.

"I felt that my first duty is to you, and that I could carve out a career in some other sphere of activity besides that afforded by the priesthood of the Catholic Church.

"At the lawn party in Oakland again I pressed my suit. Again your reply was the same. Now that barrier is gone. I struggled against deposition from priesthood, fighting against it with all the energy of

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my will, because my honor was at stake. I knew, of course, that I could not remain much longer in the priesthood or, indeed, in the Catholic Church and be intellectually sincere. The papal encyclical has solved the whole problem.

"Constance," he added, "my career begins anew now. On the fifth of next month—June—it will be seventeen years since we plighted our troth to each other. Colonel van Allston said that in three years we should have a glorious wedding celebration in the old adobe mansion. Those years have long passed, and the adobe mansion as well.

"I have begun to follow a new path. Shall we not tread it together? On the fifth of this coming June shall we not have that glorious wedding celebration so long delayed?"

Then the woman, so sweet and fair in her girlhood, now more lovely and lovable than ever in her maturity, with blushes of meek surrender said, "Yes, Don," and Underwood gathered her into his arms.

So husband and wife were united after their long, cruel separation.

Who can tell of the happiness and joy which must come to hearts that loved each other so tenderly and had remained faithful all the years?

Time passed on, as time has a habit of doing. A great Institutional Church arose in San Francisco, and the Reverend Donald Underwood was its pastor and patron. The personal fortunes of both the pastor and his wife were largely instrumental in procuring this splendid work in a part of the city where it was much needed.

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Underwood now preached as he believed the spirit of God led him. Many found inspiration and strength in his words. At first some of the clergy of the Catholic Church, with the laity as well, looked askance at him. After a while they came to know the sincerity of his purpose and the purity of his motives. Father Tower was ever his faithful friend and worked with him for the spiritual and civic betterment of the city.

One morning at the breakfast table Underwood called the attention of his wife to a paragraph in the newspaper. In it was stated that an American named Montrose had contrived to take into his hands the political control of the Republic of Salvador, in Central America, and had made himself dictator there.

"The monsignor now has the power he craved," said Donald. "I wonder if he will use it wisely."

"I am very glad that we are not residents of his domain," replied Marguerite.

For some time all went well with Montrose, and his rule was a benefit to the hitherto distracted country. His overweening ambition caused him to finally overreach himself. He began plotting the seizure of several other Central American Republics which he would add to Salvador. The rulers of those countries responded by counterplots and soon the tiny principalities were engaged in internecine strife. The clever and alert Porfirio Diaz, President of the Mexican States, awaited an opportunity to drive Montrose, the disturber and usurper, from Central American soil. Accordingly shipments of arms and ammunition which had been sent to Salvador, Montrose's

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State, were seized and confiscated or delivered to the enemies of Montrose. Soon that keen and restless spirit realized that from lack of ammunition he would be unable to utilize the men who were at his command. Foreseeing ultimate disaster, he quietly left his capital and came to Acajutla, a seaport on the Pacific side, intending to sail by a Pacific mail steamship to Panama, whither he had sent immense sums of gold. He was recognized at Acajutla, was placed under arrest, given a drumhead court-martial trial, and shot as a traitor. A monument back of the straggling town marks his resting-place.

Soon after Donald and Constance were united Mrs. Stoddard sent them a letter filled with tender messages, expressing sweet sympathy with them for the terrible trials that were past, and kind hopes for their happiness in the future. Before long she left San Francisco and journeyed eastward. The last letter the Underwoods received from her was postmarked New Orleans. In it she stated that on the following morning she was to take the veil in the convent where she had been educated. In the cloister she prayed to find the peace and contentment which the world had not given her.

Adelina Valenti remained in California until her health was restored. Later she found employment for her talents in Munich, where she established a conservatory of music which added to her fame and to her fortune. "When you visit Munich," she once wrote to the Underwoods, "my house must be your home."

The work in the Institutional Church had pro-

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gressed so favorably that Underwood felt that he could at last leave it for an indefinite period with the associate pastor and the regular corps of workers. It was now the opportunity to realize a dream which Constance and he had long cherished—a long vacation spent amidst the wonders of the Orient and the beauties of Europe.

A spring morning found them on board a great ocean liner lying at Broadway wharf. The scent of early-blooming flowers was in the air, and the warm sunshine bespoke health and happiness.

Many friends came to wish the couple Godspeed and safe return. Just before the gang-plank was withdrawn, Peter Bradley, the former sexton at St. Carmel's, but now sexton of the Institutional Church, came to bid them farewell. Faithful old Rover was with him. The dog was bulkier than in years past, but he was as full of frisks and friendliness as ever. He knew it was a time of parting. He crouched at his master's feet and looked up into his face. Underwood bent over and patted him.

"Good-bye, old doggie. I'll come back to you," he said.

"He'll lack no care, I assure you," said the worthy Peter.

Underwood patted the dog again. Rover crooned a deep half-growl in his throat, as he was wont to do when under stress of excitement.

The call came for all except passengers to go ashore. Farewells were said, and the visitors hastened to leave ship, but Rover lay on the deck and refused to stir. Coaxing and scolding alike were lost on him.

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The sexton Bradley took him in his arms and hastened across the gang-plank.

The great vessel slipped her moorings, swung lazily into the stream, turned slowly, and steamed toward the Golden Gate.

Between friends on ship and wharf was the waving of handkerchiefs and the exchange of last good-byes..

The steamer gathered headway, crossed the bar, and stood out to sea. The San Francisco line grew dim and the Farallones hove in sight.

Underwood and his wife stood on the hurricane deck. They looked into each other's eyes, and their souls spoke. Once before had they sailed these waters together. It was in that hour, across the years, when they had made each to the other their marriage vows.



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